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From the Private Secretary

3 July, 1985.

Dear Jim,

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister had a talk with the Northern Ireland Secretary this afternoon about her meeting with the Taoiseach in the margins of the European Council in Milan.

The Northern Ireland Secretary reported that the situation in Northern Ireland had taken a turn for the worse since their last meeting. The Official Unionists had chosen to devote their Opposition day to a debate on the negotiations with the Republic. Dr. Paisley was stoking discontent. For the first time mention was being made of strike action. Mr. Galvin of NORAID was said to be planning a visit to Northern Ireland. Minor disturbances were becoming a regular feature in the Shankhill Road. This was the background against which the discussions with the Republic were moving into a crucial phase.

The Prime Minister said that she had made plain to the Taoiseach that the United Kingdom could not agree to the associated confidence-building measures which he wished to accompany an agreement. But she had promised to consider how the agreement could be implemented promptly, so that the minority could see that it brought visible changes. The Northern Ireland Secretary thought that the aim should be to hold the first meeting of the Standing Inter-Governmental Committee very soon after the agreement was concluded, with an agenda which could lead to early results. A careful scenario for this would have to be worked out with the Republic in advance. He was not keen to see an office for the Committee established early on. It would only become a focus for demonstrations. It would also have to be made clear to the Irish Government in advance that we reserved the right to slow down the pace of implementation, for instance if there were serious disorders.

The Prime Minister said that it would also be important to work out well in advance a detailed programme for the public presentation of an agreement. This would need to include, for instance, a timetable for informing the US Administration and Congress as well as Unionist leaders. It would probably be right to send a personal emissary to the U.S. This should be discussed and agreed with the Irish Government, and work on it should start now. Presentation

would be as important, if not more so, than the agreement itself.

The Prime Minister and the Northern Ireland Secretary had some discussion of the timing of an Anglo/Irish Summit. In view of the situation in the North it was felt that early to mid-September might prove to be the most favourable time. But it would probably be impracticable to make a firm date until quite shortly beforehand. The matter should be looked at after the marching season was over.

The Northern Ireland Secretary reported that he had given instructions for the preparation of a White Paper, against the contingency of a breakdown of the negotiations, which would set out the Government's subsequent policy. It would be important not to give the impression that breakdown left the Government's policy in disarray.

I am copying this letter to Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

yours sincerely
C.D. Powell

(C.D. Powell)

Jim Daniell, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.