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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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CDP or
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Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Prime Minister

26 July 1985

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Dear Charles

As agreed with the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State met James Molyneaux and Enoch Powell yesterday evening.

Mr Molyneaux said that they had asked to see the Secretary of State before the recess in order to be brought up to date on his current thinking on constitutional matters. They had it in mind to discuss with the Government and the Labour party ways of improving legislative procedures under direct rule; but they needed to be sure that such discussions would not be overtaken and rendered irrelevant by developments on the Anglo-Irish front. The negotiations with the Irish were causing damage and uncertainty in the North; and Mr Molyneaux had felt it necessary to issue some dire warnings in public because he feared that elected representatives on the Unionist side might be pushed aside by extremists.

The Secretary of State said that he had discussed the Anglo-Irish negotiations with colleagues earlier in the day. There had been no decisions on the content of any agreement as discussions were continuing. The Secretary of State recognised that the continuing uncertainty was difficult for Northern Ireland, but the talks had to be confidential. He could not comment in public on the press speculation on the content of any agreement as even denials of some of the wilder ideas would constitute a breach of confidentiality; there had been one exception to this rule in that, in the face of serious concern in the Province, the Secretary of State had felt constrained to make it clear that a restructuring of or abolition of part of the UDR would not be part of an agreement.

The Secretary of State offered to provide Mr Molyneaux and Mr Powell with a fuller picture of the talks, on a strict Privy Council basis. While Mr Molyneaux felt that this would ease their position and stop them "blundering around in the dark" Mr Powell was not so sure. He wondered why the Secretary of State would wish to give such a briefing and went on to argue that any agreement, which resulted in Northern Ireland having relations with a foreign country of a type which did not apply to the rest of the United Kingdom, would infringe the constitutional guarantee. The Secretary of State stressed that the

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discussions were taking place within the framework of the guarantee and the communiqué issued after the Chequers Summit. HMG would retain full sovereign authority in Northern Ireland and there would be no question of the Republic having any form of veto over the exercise of that authority. In view of Mr Powell's doubts, it was agreed that the offer of a briefing, on a Privy Council basis, would be left on the table for the duration of the recess.

The Secretary of State concluded by saying that the Cabinet attached great importance to the position of Parliament in relation to the talks. In particular, no agreement would come into operation until Parliament had had an opportunity to consider it.

Copies of this letter go to Len Appleyard and Richard Hatfield.

Yours sincerely
J A Daniell

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