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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 May 1981

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Anglo-Irish Joint Studies

The Prime Minister held a meeting here yesterday afternoon with the Home Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Lord Privy Seal and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to consider Sir Robert Armstrong's minutes of 29 April and 11 May on the progress of the Joint Studies. Sir Robert and Mr. Wade-Gery were also present.

The meeting began with some discussion of the current situation in Northern Ireland and of the calls by the Irish Ambassador and by Mr. John Hume which the Prime Minister was expecting later in the evening. It was agreed that Mr. Atkins should be present when the Ambassador called, but no Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister. It was also agreed that a small group of Ministers under the Prime Minister's chairmanship should meet next week to consider a paper which Mr. Atkins hoped to circulate by 15 May on the Government's response to the situation presented by the continuing hunger strike at the Maze prison. There could be no departure from the principle that political status could not be conceded, but it might be possible to devise a useful role for the European Commission on Human Rights; and it would be helpful to know whether convicted prisoners in the United States were allowed to wear their own clothing. The Government's greatest need was to get the message across, both at home and abroad, that the deaths of hunger strikers were due to their own consistently maintained pursuit of their five demands and thereby of political status. It might be helpful in this context if the Central Office of Information could prepare a film documenting atrocities committed by terrorists in the context of Northern Ireland.

On the Joint Studies the following decisions were reached:

- a. The British draft for the joint report on citizenship needed to be more robust, e.g. in paragraph 12, as regards the Irish negotiators' unreasonable objectives.

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- b. The British draft for the joint report on Institutional Structures, as attached to Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 11 May, was on the right lines, although certain presentational changes might be desirable.
- c. Ministers present would each arrange for the Cabinet Office to be informed as soon as possible of any particular drafting changes which they wished to see in either of these documents.
- d. The British negotiators should wait at least a week before tabling either draft. Speed was not essential, and the present crisis not an opportune moment for handing over material which, though not intended for publications, might all too easily leak.
- e. In tabling the British draft on Institutional Structures, the British negotiators should seek to ensure that further work should be based on the British, and not on the draft put forward by the Irish. It would of course be impossible to refuse to consider Irish amendments to the British draft. The aim should be to agree if possible on a single report, with the differing views of the two sides spelt out where necessary. "The Anglo-Irish Co-operation Council" would be an acceptable title for the new inter-governmental structure envisaged.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries of other Ministers present; to the Secretary of State for Defence's Private Secretary; and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

G.G.H. Walden, Esq., CMG.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

M. O'D. R. ALEXANDER

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