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Master



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 December 1980

Dear Roy,

Call by Mr. James Molyneaux, M.P.

As you know Mr. Molyneaux called on the Prime Minister this evening. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was also present.

Mr. Molyneaux said that he entirely accepted the Prime Minister's word about the significance of her visit to Dublin and about the meaning of the Communique. He had welcomed the fact that the Prime Minister had been accompanied by a large delegation since this had made it clear that the agenda would not be limited to the problems of Northern Ireland. He had not been surprised that the Prime Minister had chosen to make no statement on her return. Indeed he had told Mr Powell a day or two previously that he did not expect the Prime Minister to make a statement since she had not made one after her recent visit to Rome.

Mr. Molyneaux said that none the less he and those whom he represented did have one or two worries. He himself was concerned that while the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State might be clear about the purpose of the study groups, the study groups themselves might "gain a momentum and a mind of their own". He thought it important that Ministers should keep a very close eye on the work of the study groups in order that they did not find themselves presented with faits accomplis. The Prime Minister told Mr. Molyneaux that the work of the study groups would be closely supervised.

Mr. Molyneaux said that he himself had no objection to the building up of close working relationships between the United Kingdom and the Republic. However it was necessary to bear in mind that the Government in Dublin were past masters at separating out Northern Ireland problems and at finding ways of dealing with those problems in isolation. They would also try to deal direct with Ulster though this would be more difficult than it had been in the days of Stormont. In this context, the sort of phrases in the Communique which worried his constituents were "bring forward policies and proposals", "commission joint studies", and "new institutional structures". Was there for instance any chance

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that the study groups would go on indefinitely and that new structures would be erected in parallel. As an example of the kind of suspicions that existed in Northern Ireland, Mr. Molyneux mentioned that some people connected with the present work of the Boundary Commission there were asking whether it was worth carrying on!

The Prime Minister indicated that the fears were groundless. In relation to the institutional structures, the Prime Minister stressed that the studies would be of "possible new institutional structures". As her letter to Dr. Paisley had made clear there was no guarantee that the two Governments would reach agreement on the establishment of any new structures. The Secretary of State noted that a number of structures already existed in the economic and security fields. Nothing that had happened in Dublin would or could have the slightest effect on the work of the Boundary Commission.

Mr. Molyneux said that he welcomed the Prime Minister's firm policy on the hunger strike and in particular the statement she had made in the House this afternoon. He said that he and his colleagues had been discouraging their own people in Northern Ireland from responding to demonstrations in favour of the hunger strikers. The Secretary of State said that this had been most helpful. The Prime Minister reiterated that political status would not be given to the hunger strikers. The Government's position would be repeated in a statement which Mr. Atkins would be making to the House tomorrow.

I am sending copies of this letter to Paul Lever (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely

Richard Alexander

R. Harrington, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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