

COVERING SECRET
From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

Ireland 16



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Michael Alexander Esq
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9 February 1981

Dear Michael

I attach a copy of a note of a discussion last Wednesday between Sir Kenneth Stowe and Mr Enoch Powell: I understand that the Prime Minister asked to see this, in connection with her forthcoming meeting with Mr Powell, when Mr Atkins mentioned it to her on Sunday.

Mr Atkins also mentioned to the Prime Minister that he would let her see, by way of more general background, an assessment of the implications of Dr Paisley's current activities: I hope to send you that as soon as possible tomorrow morning.

Yours sincerely
Julie Hopkins

M W HOPKINS

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

I visited Mr. Enoch Powell at his home on Wednesday 4 February for an informal talk which lasted nearly 2 hours. The call was at his request and was reported in advance to and approved by the Secretary of State.

2. The conversation fell into two parts. First Mr. Powell gave a fairly brief resume of the conduct of affairs with regard to Northern Ireland by the Government since the last general election (and before), expressing his perplexity as to the Government's motives, his sadness at their lack of understanding of the realities in the Province, and his concern that even now there may be forces at work seemingly intending to drive Ulster out of the Union. There was nothing especially new in what he said except perhaps the emphasis he placed upon his personal regret that his experience, knowledge and known willingness to help the Government both by tendering advice and other means (unspecified) had never been taken up. He plainly felt that had he been listened to, affairs would have been conducted better but nobody seemed to want to talk to him and he was rejected.

3. Secondly, I responded at much greater length (he listening intently the while) by giving Mr. Powell a resume of the same events as seen by Government and myself in particular. I began by saying I had no belief in his conspiracy theory and that although events had certainly not gone as the Government or he had hoped this did not derive from malice on the Government's part. I said that the Government's policy had been consistent in that it wanted and still wanted to give people in Northern Ireland through elected representatives greater responsibilities for their own affairs but it was not the Government who had blocked the way forward. I agreed with his description of the Conference about political development that it was as "predictable and futile" (his words) because, for reasons which we need not go over again, the Official Unionist Party had boycotted it.

4. I took him through the sequence of events post the General Election 1979 chronologically, starting with Sligo Bay and Warrenpoint, which led naturally into an account of the meeting on security which the Secretary of State had with Mr. O'Kennedy

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and Mr. Collins on 5 October 1979. This led on in turn to an account of developments on the security front since then and I gave him straight the Chief Constable's view that there was no matter concerning security in Northern Ireland or the maintenance of law and order in Northern Ireland on which the Chief Constable wanted more than the Republic were giving. I invited Mr. Powell to talk to the Chief Constable himself on this matter. I emphasised this for the specific purpose of demonstrating that there never had been a "price" (his words) paid by HMG to secure the Republic's co-operation on security. I put forward the opinion that Mr. Haughey, sitting at the European Council with 8 other Heads of Government, at least 6 of whom had a terrorist problem could not afford to be equivocal about terrorism. Mr. Powell argued against this - I prefaced my remarks by saying that I did not expect this EEC aspect to have any appeal to him!

5. I gave him a full account of the handling of the hunger strike and told him of our intelligence of an impending renewal; points emphasised were that there had been no deal whatsoever nor would there be, that it had been defeated by a combination of pressures not all of which I was free to disclose but he need not assume by that it was Mr. Haughey who was delivering the pressure; and that from beginning to end the management of that crisis had been in the hands of the Ulster-men who within the NIO dealt with prisons and administration - and they were not of a disposition to do deals with terrorists. I claimed that it was recognised by all sections of the community in Northern Ireland that the IRA had suffered a major defeat. Mr. Powell did not much like this but was half-hearted in contesting it and said that we were still in a compromised position because of the prisoners remaining in special category status. He quoted the Prime Minister's remarks to him in the House as meaning that there was still equivocation and differences of view in the Cabinet about whether or not IRA terrorists should have special status and was suspicious of the "commitments alleged to have been entered into in the past" ... (the attached hansard extract of his exchange with the Prime Minister which he quoted shows by underlining the points about which he was suspicious). I stressed that Ministers were of one mind on this, not divided.

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6. I then referred to the Dublin Summit and said that it was obvious that there seemed to be deliberate misunderstanding. I referred back to the earlier summit of May 21st 1980 and reminded him then of the agreement by Mr. Haughey that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland etc. I said that the communique of 8 December was only open to misinterpretation if one overlooked the starting point which was that it described a discussion between two Heads of Government of sovereign states, one the Republic of Ireland and one the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Of course the communique did not formally describe each Prime Minister in these terms but it was plain enough that they met in those respective capacities and that all that followed in the communique concerned relationships and interests between two sovereign states, not between one sovereign state and another with a third element in some kind of limbo. At this point Mr. Powell was provoked (his words) into attack, denouncing what I had said. He argued that if it truly was a meeting between Head of two sovereign states recognising a common interest then international usage (or words to that effect) would surely have required that, before proceeding further together, one party which laid claim to part of the national territory of the other should give up that claim. I reiterated that the communique between the two Heads of Government was plainly on the basis that any such claim was not accepted and referred back again to the May 21st communique (interestingly the Daily Telegraph of 6 February contains a letter from Mr. David Morrison, which makes the point very neatly -
... copy attached). Mr. Powell said that I was in effect suggesting that he and I could have a useful discussion on a variety of matters while he claimed ownership of part of the lease of my house while I made no such claim over any part of the lease of his house. I did not follow him into this analogy and at this point he expressed an amiable regret for having been provoked.

7. Mr. Powell made two further comments worth recording. He was dismissive of the whole of what I had said about security co-operation with the Republic although this was conveyed by attitude

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This is a copy - The original has been extracted and retained under S. 3(4).

argument.

rather than by substantive/He asked whether I was aware that, as he had reason to believe, there was "more than the IRA involved" in Tynan Abbey. I asked him what on earth he meant, believing that he was implying (as he had done in the past) that agents provocateurs were at work. He replied that the IRA had Middle East connections and it was likely to be Algerians involved. I made no comment beyond saying that I thought we had a lot of information about that attack.*

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8. Mr. Powell then turned to the malevolence issue. He said that I was wrong to think he meant that there was a conspiracy to expel Ulster. It was more "the nature of the beast". He then launched into his familiar attack on officials in the NIO. I was (politely I hope) firm on this: I told him if as I believe he was referring only to UK officials in the NIO (he confirmed that this was so) then surely he understood that he was referring to very few people indeed: myself, a Deputy Secretary in London and Belfast and 5 Under Secretaries. I described the functions of each and said that those principally concerned with political affairs and public relations (Mr. Moriarty and Mr. Wyatt) had joined the NIO after me and that I had chosen each because of his outstanding ability. I got a bit pompous about the integrity of UK civil servants and their support and their commitment to the principle that it was Ministers who determined policy. He was quite unconvinced and urged me to look closely into what was being said and done by senior officials in the NIO because there seemed to be a continuing thrust of policy against the integrity of UK with regard to NI. At this point I gave him an account of how the Secretary of State and I had brought the senior Ulster civil servants more closely into all aspects of policy and that we enjoyed their confidence and support. With characteristic perversity Mr. Powell said that he thought this could have two meanings - either that we were constructing a model for devolution and by implication, expulsion, or, as he would prefer, integration and it was <sup>important to</sup> him that the Government should make clear its intentions. My response was to say that I

\* Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(4)

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hoped the outcome would be that we should be better able to tackle the problems of the Province particularly economic and financial.

9. Mr. Powell summed up our discussion by saying that he was grateful for the time we had spent together, that he thought it possible that he could reconcile (his words) the different perceptions that he and I had of the sequence of events, and he seemed to derive some degree of reassurance from that although I would not put any money on it. But, he said, what was left outstanding between us was his concern <sup>about</sup> the nature of the beast and the thrust of officials in Whitehall, and he urged me to give this my attention.

10. As we walked downstairs he returned to the hunger strike and said "do not rely too much on that victory while the special category continues." We parted in good humour (I think) on his door step with my saying that I would of course be pleased to talk to him again if he wished and he indicated that he would so wish.

KRS.

K.R. STOWE  
6 February 1981

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