

weekend box 5

Prime Minister

A lot of reading here, I'm afraid. Mr. ~~Prior~~ and Ian Gow will look at

these papers over the weekend.

The key passage you should look at is at the end of the second draft letter, which contains a statement which would carry your and Mr. Prior's authority.

Subject to Mr. Prior's comments, are you content that Sir R. Armstrong should write as proposed?

See comments: I will have a word with Ian to see what Flag A

Ref. A082/0077

MR BUTLER

He has spotted any other matters which have missed Discussion between Mr Geoffrey Sloan and Mr Clive Abbott. It will have even detail not

In your minute of 4 October you confirmed that the Prime Minister was content that I should agree to see Mr Enoch Powell as he had requested.

FARRB 12.11.

2. Mr Powell came to see me on 1 November; Mr Gow was with me.
3. Mr Powell started by apologising in advance for talking rather a lot, and then set out at length his perception of events since 1979 and his reasons for thinking that there was and had for long been a conspiracy (of which Mr Abbott's responses to Mr Sloan were illustrative) among Northern Ireland Office officials to bring about the re-establishment of a power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland and a Council of Ireland on the Sunningdale model, and that in pursuance of this objective those officials had not been candid with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or with his colleagues in the Cabinet about their contacts with the Irish Government and about the extent of their commitment to consult the Irish Government on constitutional developments in and proposals for Northern Ireland.
4. I said that it had not been part of my instructions from the Prime Minister to inquire into relations between the NIO and Dublin; that it was for the Secretary of State to answer for the policies and management of his Department; but that he had made very serious charges which would, if true, be of concern to me as Joint Head of the Civil Service as well as to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister. I said that I would take this aspect of our conversation further with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State.
5. As to the Sloan-Abbott conversations, I told Mr Powell the extent of my own inquiries into the matter since the Prime Minister had asked me to investigate it. Mr Powell disclosed two interesting points which were not known to us before:

\* Mr Powell





- (1) The manuscript notes by Mr Sloan, copies of which were sent to Mr Gow in September, were not (as both Mr Gow and I understood them to be) the notes which Mr Sloan made at his interview with Mr Abbott on 26 January 1981, but notes made after that date from the original notes (and presumably before the typed notes sent to Mr Gow by Mr Molyneaux on 29 June 1982). Mr Powell showed us a copy of Mr Sloan's original notes, which were indeed very scrappy and disjointed.
- (2) Directly after each of his meetings with Mr Abbott, Mr Sloan had given an oral account of the meetings, on the first occasion to Mr Molyneaux and on the second occasion to Mr Powell. I pointed out to Mr Powell that, though Mr Payne had asked Mr Sloan in some detail about his dealings with Mr Molyneaux over these meetings with Mr Abbott, Mr Sloan had said nothing about going to see Mr Molyneaux and Mr Powell directly after the meetings: on the contrary, he had replied that Mr Molyneaux was not told about the meetings until he was given the typescript notes in May 1982, and he had told Mr Payne that he had met Mr Powell only once, and then only socially, with Mr Molyneaux.

6. I explained to Mr Powell why I had reported to the Prime Minister that I could see no way of resolving with certainty the conflict between the testimony of Mr Sloan and that of Mr Abbott, and why in my judgment Mr Sloan's notes could not be relied upon as an account of what Mr Abbott had said, or as satisfactory evidence upon which to call in question Mr Abbott's integrity and the veracity of his rebuttals of Mr Sloan's account of his answers to Mr Sloan's questions.

7. Mr Powell did not challenge these conclusions; but he reverted to the more general points with which he had opened the discussion. I repeated that I would take these further with the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister.





8. Mr Powell subsequently wrote and suggested that in all the circumstances I should feel it right for him to have a copy of the shorthand transcript, to which he would assign whatever security rating I would think right. I presume that this is intended to refer to the notes of my meeting with Mr Powell, and not to the transcript of Mr Payne's meeting with Mr Sloan. We did not make a verbatim note of the meeting with Mr Powell, but my Private Secretary took detailed notes, and produced a note for record. I propose to offer to send a copy of that to Mr Powell on a Privy Counsellor basis, inviting him to suggest any amendments he wishes to its account of what he said, and asking him to treat it as personal and confidential, but agreeing that he may show it to Mr Molyneaux.

*copy attached*

9. I think, and the Northern Ireland Office agree, that I should write to Mr Powell, in pursuance of my undertaking to take further the matters he raised with me; the letter would get on record the two new points about Mr Sloan's proceedings mentioned in paragraph 5 above (the second of which in particular is important evidence that Mr Sloan's accounts cannot be regarded as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth); would summarise what Mr Powell said to me, and what I said to Mr Powell; and would counter his allegations about a conspiracy and lack of candour of Northern Ireland Office officials. I have drafted such a letter; the draft submitted herewith follows consultation with and reflects the comments of Mr Woodfield.

10. I accordingly attach:

- (a) a draft letter to Mr Powell responding to his request for a shorthand transcript;
- (b) a longer letter to Mr Powell on the lines indicated in paragraph 9.

I should be grateful for the Prime Minister's authority to proceed accordingly, subject to the views of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to whose Private Secretary I am sending copies of this minute and its attachments. I am also sending copies of these papers to Mr Gow.

*RA*

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

11 November 1982





DRAFT LETTER FROM SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG TO  
THE RT HON J ENOCH POWELL MBE MP, HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thank you for your letter of 2 November.

I presume that, when you write of a "shorthand transcript", you have in mind a record of the meeting which you and Ian Gow and I had on 1 November. We did not make a verbatim or shorthand record, but my Private Secretary was making notes, and has produced a record of the meeting. I should be very ready to send you a copy of that record, if we could agree that you were sent it on on Privy Counsellor basis. I would understand that you would want to show the record to Mr Molyneaux for his private information; I hope you would agree to regard it otherwise as for your and his eyes only.

In that event I should of course be glad if you would feel able to let me know if you thought that in any respect it misrepresented what you said; we could then take account of your corrections and suggestions in revising the note.

I shall be writing to you separately a letter on which I shall not put any security classification and which incorporates inter alia a summary account of our discussion.



DRAFT NOTE FOR RECORD

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On 1st November 1982, Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Ian Gow MP, saw the Rt Hon J Enoch Powell MP, at his request, to discuss the outcome of the investigation which the Prime Minister had asked Sir Robert Armstrong to conduct into the allegations made by Mr Geoffrey Sloan concerning his conversations with Mr Clive Abbott of NIO.

2. Mr Powell said that he hoped to be able to discuss not simply the precise details of the conversations between Mr Sloan and Mr Abbott. The Government in considering its future policy [towards Northern Ireland] would need to do so in the context of events since it came to office, of which the Sloan/Abbott conversations provided a graphic illustration. Sir Robert Armstrong said that he would be glad to listen to what Mr Powell had to say and would, if possible, comment on any further issues that were raised, but pointed out that his instructions from the Prime Minister had related only to the verification of Mr Sloan's account of his conversations with Mr Abbott, and his inquiries had been related to that matter. Mr Powell said that he understood this, but his primary concern was the whole context of the affair which, he believed, involved some of Sir Robert Armstrong's broader responsibilities as well as the Prime Minister's specific instruction.



3. Mr Powell said that when the present Government took office in 1979 they had not followed the policies on Northern Ireland which they had foreshadowed while in Opposition a policy of eschewing new political initiatives unless these would bring clear benefit to the Province. In particular the Manifesto had been drafted in terms of action to strengthen the institutions of local government in Northern Ireland. There was what he considered to be a significant statement contained in the Advice to [Conservative Party] Candidates issued on 26th April 1979 to the effect that a Conservative Government would be under pressure not to adopt the policies foreshadowed in Opposition but, instead, to follow the policy that had, in fact, been adopted. Mr Powell said that the new Conservative Secretary of State did not, from the very start, have in his mind the pre-Election policy and that the reason for this was aptly summed up in the statements which Mr Sloan attributed to Mr Abbott that the pursuit of the party's pre-<sup>Election?</sup>decision policies would have lost the co-operation of the Republic over security and would have run counter to understandings with the Irish Government [Answer A2, 17th Nov. 1981]; this was the significance of Mr Abbott's answer, even if he had not used precisely those words. The terrorist attacks of August 1979 [the assassination of Earl Mountbatten and Warrenpoint] which had both been triggered from south of the Border had had a deep effect on the Irish Government and had led to the intensification of communications between Dublin and Her Majesty's Government,



5<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, 1979

particularly the Northern Ireland Office. Mr Powell said that the outward demonstration of this new attitude was the communiqué of the meeting held on 7th October 1979 which had not been published in full in Britain at the time - although he did not see this as sinister. Later, following up a remark by Sir Kenneth Stowe that the Government's new policy initiative had flowed from that meeting, he had elicited the ~~test~~<sup>x</sup> of the communiqué in response to a Parliamentary Question to the Prime Minister. The crucial paragraph was paragraph 8 which referred to "the urgency and importance of proceeding with all speed to re-establish a power-sharing executive". Mr Powell said that the White Paper which accompanied the initiative had only become available five weeks after it was launched; that demonstrated the haste with which the initiative had been prepared. In passing, Mr Powell said that Mr Merlyn Rees had predicted in conversation with him that there would be an attempt to establish an Assembly although Mr Rees had also said that, as yet, even the Cabinet was not aware of it.

4. Mr Powell stated that, following the replacement of Mr West as leader of the Ulster Unionist Party by Mr Molyneaux, Northern Ireland Office officials had infiltrated the party. Sir Robert Armstrong asked Mr Powell if he would elaborate on this. Mr Powell said that officials had approached disaffected members of the Ulster Unionist Party and had fostered discontent in order to forward the policies of the NIO.

Is this  
correct?  
May I see  
the  
communiqué



As background, Mr Powell said that in 1975 he had received evidence that NIO officials had been acting as agents provocateurs and had provided Mr Rees, who was then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with the names of the people concerned, and that Mr Rees had later told him that the people were FCO officials rather than NIO officials. Sir Robert Armstrong said that this was a very serious charge to make.

5. Continuing his resumé of events, Mr Powell said that the political initiative of the winter of 1979-80 had been abandoned about April 1980 because of the abstention of the OUP and the exposed position of the DUP. There had then grown up a widespread belief that a devolved Assembly would be set up before the end of the year. However, before that could happen, the IRA hunger strike had begun in October. This had ended temporarily on 8th December, after a meeting between the Prime Minister and Mr Haughey which marked an epoch. The Government's plan before that meeting had, Mr Powell said, been to create by working with people within the Province some form of devolved Parliament to which a power-sharing element could later be added. This approach had been adopted as a result of the lesson learnt in 1974 but after the meeting - although its outcome was interpreted slightly differently by the Prime Minister and Mr Haughey - the new approach was to work "from outside inwards". The IRA leaders had been very sensitive to the behaviour of HMG at that time, and had called off the hunger strike which had



allowed the re-establishment of security co-operation between the NIO and the Dublin Government. When the hunger strike was resumed, it was defeated, largely by the personal resolve of the Prime Minister, but not until what might be described as "the second edition" of the Anglo-Irish agreement was available in early December 1981.

6. In response to a question from Sir Robert Armstrong, Mr Powell agreed that he had intended to refer to the meeting between the Prime Minister and Mr Fitzgerald which actually took place on 6th November 1981.

7. Mr Powell said that the implications of the communique issued after that meeting had provoked an explosion in the Province and Mr Fitzgerald had made it clear that the institutional framework for closer relations between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic could not be fully implemented until there was a Northern Ireland Assembly which could provide a Northern Ireland <sup>Component?</sup> in the "parliamentary tier" of Anglo-Irish relations. From what followed it was clear that, although Mr Prior had only recently (September 1981) become Secretary of State, there was already an NIO scheme available which would fit the Fitzgerald plan. The importance of the Sloan/Abbott conversations was as corroborative evidence of this: they established that the notion of an Assembly with progressive devolution by agreement with the Irish Government was in existence by January 1981.



8. Mr Powell said that Mr Sloan's report of his conversation with Mr Abbott showed the relationship between the setting up of an Assembly, agreement with the Republic, and some form of Anglo-Irish organ. He said that this was considered an improvement on 1974 because it did not mention power-sharing, but it was presumed that, once Northern Irish politicians were persuaded to participate and could see the advantages of an Assembly, this would be the next step. As the plan already existed in January 1981 it was clear that Mr Prior's package was not a new invention but was on a preconceived NIO plan. However, by the beginning of 1982, the co-operation of the Republic had been lost because, so it was said, Her Majesty's Government had not fulfilled their commitment to proceed in consultation with the Irish Republic. Again, Mr Sloan's record showed that this commitment was considered in January 1981 to be a precondition of co-operation by the Republic. Although it was subsequently denied by the Prime Minister on 27th July 1982, Mr Powell considered that it had been implicitly supported by admissions from the Secretary of State and also explicitly by references by the Irish Government. None of this had surprised Mr Powell or his colleagues. He was, for example, supported by a conversation which an NIO official had had with an ex-member of the Faulkner Government earlier in the year about what would happen if Mr Molyneaux took part in the Assembly: "Wait till he is in the Assembly and can see which side his bread is buttered."



9. Mr Powell apologised for recounting at such length his perception of events since 1979 but he said that he considered that it was essential context for discussing the significance of the conversations between Sloan and Abbott.

10. Sir Robert Armstrong said that he wished to be certain that he had fully understood the significance of Mr Powell's account. Mr Powell appeared to be saying that there was a determination, almost a conspiracy, among NIO officials to work to recreate something like a "Council of Ireland" on ~~the~~ lines of the Sunningdale agreement as a first step towards an implied ultimate aim of a change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. In pursuit of these aims, it was suggested that officials were in constant contact with the Government of the Republic and were working to undermine existing Northern Ireland institutions and create new ones. It was further suggested that this policy existed in the Northern Ireland Office before May 1979 and that the incoming Conservative Administration had been brought to abandon the policies they had formed in Opposition in favour of this policy. In such a context, the conversations between Mr Sloan and Mr Abbott were important not so much in themselves but as revealing this hidden policy.

11. Mr Powell accepted Sir Robert Armstrong's re-statement of his thesis; he said that the Sloan/Abbott conversations should be regarded as illustrative if not probative of this thesis.



12. Sir Robert Armstrong said that it was clear that Mr Powell was implying that two Conservative Secretaries of State and other Ministers had been diverted from their party's policy by the improper activity of officials. He was sure that Mr Powell would accept that Ministers sometimes changed their policies on taking office and discovering facts of which they had not previously been aware. However, while there might be an element of such legitimate change in this case, what Mr Powell was alleging went well beyond that.

13. Mr Powell said that if the change in policy had been due simply to an incoming Secretary of State faced with new evidence, he (Mr Powell) would still have had the duty of exposing the advice given to Ministers if he disagreed with the policy that resulted. Clearly advice must have been given to the new Conservative Ministers, including information on pre-existing agreements with the Irish Government and officials' own views on how to proceed and Ministers may have considered that there was no alternative to continuing with the existing NIO policy; but they could not have known some of the means by which that policy was being promoted.

14. Sir Robert Armstrong asked if Mr Powell was suggesting that officials had been in contact with the Irish Government without the knowledge of Ministers. Mr Powell said that, even if Ministers were aware of the contacts, they might not have been aware of the full content of the discussions. Sir Robert Armstrong said that he had no reason to believe that this was true. Mr Powell said that his view was



supported by recent statements about the extent of the Government's commitment to consult and, if possible, agree with the Irish Government; there had been a contradiction between the statements of the Prime Minister and Mr Prior. Sir Robert Armstrong pointed out that the Prime Minister had denied the existence of an obligation to consult the Irish Government. Mr Gow added that no valid obligation could have been entered into by officials without the backing of Ministers. Mr Powell said that he was not convinced that there had been no commitment, but there was sufficient ambiguity about its extent to allow an apparent verbal contradiction.

15. Concluding this part of the discussion, Sir Robert Armstrong said that he could not speak of the extent of relations between the NIO and Dublin: it had not been part of his instructions from the Prime Minister to inquire into that, and it was in any case for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to answer for the policy and management of his Department. Nevertheless, Mr Powell had made some very serious charges about the behaviour of officials: even if they were for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to consider as NIO officials were answerable to him, they would, if true, be of great concern to him as Joint Head of the Civil Service.



PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

16. Turning to the Sloan/Abbott conversations themselves, Sir Robert Armstrong said that he had devoted considerable time to the case since the Prime Minister had asked him to investigate it. He had read the verbatim transcript, which made at Mr Sloan's request, of Mr Sloan's meeting with Mr Payne. He had also read Mr Sloan's typed accounts of the two interviews with Mr Abbott which had been supplied by Mr Molyneaux, and Mr Gow had let him have a photocopy of the manuscript from which these typescripts had been made. Mr Powell interrupted to explain that that manuscript was not a facsimile of the notebook Sloan had used during the actual talks with Abbott but he had recently sent Sir Robert and Mr Gow another photocopy of the typescript version with underlinings which indicated words that had occurred in Mr Sloan's notes made during the talks. Mr Powell explained that these rough notes with marginalia such as "VIA" - very important admission - had been used by Mr Sloan on the day after each interview to produce the longer manuscript note. He then showed Sir Robert and Mr Gow a copy of a page of the original notes which neither had previously seen.

17. Mr Powell said that on the evening of the first interview Mr Sloan had used his notes made at the interview to brief Mr Molyneaux orally about what had taken place. Mr Molyneaux had made his own notes of what Sloan told him and had used these to brief Mr Powell. Mr Sloan had similarly



briefed himself (Mr Powell) shortly after the second interview.

18. Sir Robert Armstrong said that Mr Sloan had given Mr Payne the impression that he had not told Mr Molyneaux about the interview until much later when he realised its political implications. It was clear from Mr Sloan's interview with Mr Payne that Mr Sloan had said that Mr Powell and Mr Molyneaux had not seen the typescript accounts until about May 1982. Mr Powell said that that was correct with regard to Mr Sloan's written up transcript, but Mr Sloan had not disclosed the fact that he had made a verbal report to Mr Molyneaux on the day of the first interview and to himself on the second occasion. Until this year neither Mr Molyneaux or himself had intended to make public use of what they had been told; it was only the crisis in Northern Ireland affairs earlier in the year that had caused them to do so. The typescript had been given to Mr Molyneaux to draw on in the debate on Mr Prior's Bill but had not in the event been used. Finally, in June, Mr Powell had decided, as a result of the revelation by Sir John Biggs-Davison about the Advice to Candidates to which he had referred earlier, that he must reveal the Sloan/Abbott conversations in the House to show that what had been happening was not as portrayed by the Government.

19. Sir Robert Armstrong said that, although Mr Sloan might have told the literal truth to Mr Payne, he had failed to mention his first report to Mr Molyneaux. Nor had he told Mr Abbott of his relationship with Mr Molyneaux, though it was clear that he was already employed by Mr Molyneaux to undertake research at the time of the first interview, and had presented himself purely as an academic. When Mr Payne saw Mr Sloan, Mr Sloan had said that he had been an unpaid researcher for Mr Molyneaux from about October 1980. His conduct to Mr Abbott in this regard seemed to be rather disingenuous.



20. Mr Powell said that Sloan had not contradicted himself. He could quite understand that Mr Sloan might not wish to tell Mr Abbott about his connection with Mr Molyneaux; in Northern Ireland it was often wise not to disclose one's political connections. Mr Powell said that it would be for Mr Molyneaux to confirm the details of Mr Sloan's relationship with him.

21. Sir Robert Armstrong said that he had talked to Mr Abbott himself and had taken him in detail and at length through both the typescripts provided by Mr Sloan. There was agreement that the interviews had taken place and that the questions were as stated by Mr Sloan. However, there the agreement ended. Apart from what he considered to be two minor errors of detail Mr Sloan had stood by his account of Mr Abbott's answers. Mr Abbott, who had not made notes at the time, said that Mr Sloan's version of his answers was inaccurate, incomplete, misleading and distorted. Abbott had given details of these shortcomings and had explained how what he had said might have been misinterpreted.

22. Mr Powell said that the contemporaneous notes, as represented in the red underlinings, in the typescript endorsed with his letter of 21st October, were solid evidence of what had passed. It was very improbable that Mr Sloan had invented them. Sir Robert Armstrong said that they were very incomplete notes: the discussions had lasted over an hour in each case - Mr Sloan's pass showed that the second interview lasted about an hour and a half - and Mr Abbott talked very fast. Mr Powell agreed that the notes were



fragmentary. Sir Robert pointed out that they also contained at least two errors - the Christian name of Derek Trimble and the reference to Mr Biaggi (described as Biaggio) as one of the "Four Horsemen". Mr Powell said that the first error occurred in writing up the long version of the interview and was understandable: the contemporaneous note only used the initial D. After some discussion it was agreed that the reference to Biaggi(o) was also a clear mistake. Sir Robert Armstrong said that someone as well informed as Mr Abbott would not have made such an elementary mistake and could have had no motive for misleading Mr Sloan on the point. Nevertheless, Mr Powell thought it was unlikely that Mr Sloan had made a mistake about the name, given its place in the middle of the otherwise correct list of the "Four Horsemen", and, in any case, such a mistake could not be used to discredit the whole document. He asked whether Mr Abbott denied the important points, such as that there had been an understanding with the Irish Government.

23. Sir Robert Armstrong said that Abbott had denied this and many of the other statements attributed to him in Mr Sloan's notes and had given a very different version of the discussion. For example, Mr Abbott had said that the observations attributed to him in the note of the interview on 26th January 1981 which Mr Powell had said demonstrated pre-knowledge of Mr Prior's Bill had in fact been related to Dr Brian Mawhinney's proposals for "rolling devolution", which were in the public domain at the time of the Sloan/Abbott interview.



24. Sir Robert said that he could see no way of reconciling the two conflicting versions of the discussions or of deciding definitely between them, as there was no independent record. Although it might be said that Mr Abbott would be bound to deny Mr Sloan's version, there was no other reason to call in question his veracity or integrity. There was certain circumstantial evidence which suggested that Mr Sloan could have misunderstood some of what was said, but no clear evidence on which one could base a conclusive judgement. Sir Robert said that on the very limited evidence available he had to remain agnostic. He had been unable to shake Mr Abbott; although he had not himself met Mr Sloan, one or two things, raised certain doubts about his account.

*Passage deleted and closed, 60 years, under FOI Exemption.*

*Wayland. 2 October 2012*

It was simply not possible to say with any certainty what had passed between Mr Sloan and Mr Abbott, and it would clearly be unfair to take any action against Mr Abbott as a result.

25. Mr Powell said that he understood that conclusion so far as possible disciplinary action was concerned. What was more important was that the conversations should be seen in the context he had described. Mr Sloan's report offered an illustration of what had happened and why policy had been different from the pre-election Conservative policy.



26. Sir Robert pointed out that all the questions Mr Powell had raised in his description of events in Northern Ireland would arise even if the Sloan/Abbott conversations had not taken place. Mr Powell accepted this. Sir Robert went on to say that although, on what he had seen, he could not conclude that the Sloan/Abbott conversations supported Mr Powell's wider contentions, these were very serious charges in their own right. As a result, he would take further this aspect of their conversation, although if successive Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland had been satisfied with the conduct of their officials it would be difficult to go beyond that. Mr Powell said that he understood that constitutional point, although there was also a question of the collective responsibility of the Government as a whole.

27. In conclusion, Mr Powell thanked Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Gow for giving him the opportunity to discuss the wider picture. He knew that they were seized of the significance of the possibility of a difference between the actual and alleged causes of Government policy and between the methods employed and those that ought to have been employed to further it. What he had described questioned the integrity of the information and advice offered to Ministers and on which they would have to base future policy.

28. Sir Robert Armstrong said that others might place a different interpretation on events to what might be termed the conspiracy



theory advanced by Mr Powell. If Ministers accepted Mr Powell's view, it would raise grave concern about the professional integrity of the civil servants concerned and he would be reporting the outcome of this discussion to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and to the Prime Minister



DRAFT LETTER FROM SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG TO  
THE RT HON J ENOCH POWELL MBE MP, HOUSE OF  
COMMONS

I have been reflecting on our conversation on 1 November.

2. On the particular matter of Mr Sloan's conversations with Mr Abbott, I gave you an account of the inquiries which I had made. You were able to add to my knowledge in two respects:

- (1) The manuscript notes, photocopies of which Mr Molyneaux sent to Mr Gow, were not (as Mr Gow and I both understood them to be) the notes which Mr Sloan made during his interviews, but they were an intermediate stage between the notes made at the time of the interviews and the typescripts which Mr Molyneaux sent to Mr Gow on 29 June and 18 August 1982. You told me that you had copies of Mr Sloan's original notes - indeed you showed me a copy of one page from them - and you said that you had worked from those notes in producing the copy of the typescript with red underlinings which you sent to Mr Gow and to me on 21 October.



(2) Mr Sloan had given an oral account of his interview with Mr Abbott on 26 January 1981 to Mr Molyneaux on the evening of that same day, and an account of his interview on 17 November 1981 to you on or very shortly after that day. I told you that this had not emerged from Mr Sloan's discussion with Mr Payne, in which Mr Sloan indicated that he did not give Mr Molyneaux the typescript notes until May 1982, but said nothing about oral briefings immediately after the interviews. Indeed in the discussion Mr Sloan told Mr Payne that he had met you only once, and then only socially on an occasion when he was seeing Mr Molyneaux and you came into the room.

3. As I told you, as a result of my inquiries I was faced with a clear conflict as between on the one hand Mr Sloan's notes of his interviews with Mr Abbott, and Mr Sloan's assertions as to their accuracy as a record of what Mr Abbott said, and on the other hand Mr Abbott's assertions, which I myself tested in two long discussions with him, that Mr Sloan's notes are so inaccurate, incomplete, misleading and distorted as



to bear little relation to what he actually said. They could not both be right; there was of course no verbatim record of either of the interviews; and I could see no way of resolving this conflict with certainty. I hope that I was able to say enough to make clear to you why, given other circumstances, including the way in which Mr Sloan's notes came to be made, the failure to check them with Mr Abbott at the time, and the long delay before they were produced, I had reported to the Prime Minister as my conclusion that those notes could not be relied upon as an account of what Mr Abbott said, or as satisfactory evidence upon which to call in question Mr Abbott's integrity and the veracity of his rebuttals of Mr Sloan's account of his answers to Mr Sloan's questions.

4. You explained to me that you had regarded Mr Abbott's answers to Mr Sloan's questions, as reported by Mr Sloan, not so much as significant in themselves as illustrative (if not probative) in a more general context of what you saw as a persistent determination - one might



even say a conspiracy - on the part of Northern Ireland Office officials over a long period of years but particularly since May 1979 to bring into being the institutions of a devolved and at least potentially "power-sharing" government in Northern Ireland, against the wishes of many people in Northern Ireland, in pursuance of agreements or understandings reached between them and by officials of the Irish Government in Dublin wholly or partly without the authority or knowledge of British Ministers. You drew attention in this context to changes in the policy of members of the present Government as between the statements made by the Conservative Party on Northern Ireland before the Election in May 1979 and the policies they followed and the statements they made after they took office; and you attributed those changes of policies, which you thought mistaken, to the advice which Ministers had received from Northern Ireland Office officials, and specifically to what you described as a lack of candour on the part of those officials in the advice which they gave to Ministers in the British Government and in particular in the information which they gave to Ministers about the



contents of their contacts with officials of the Irish Government in Dublin. You believed that Northern Ireland Office officials had been determined to work for the establishment of an assembly in Northern Ireland, in order that such an assembly might provide a Northern Ireland component for the so-called "parliamentary tier" of Anglo-Irish relations which successive Taoiseachs in Dublin had been known to favour. (In that connection you reminded me that in a speech which you made on 25 September you had said that in his interview with Mr Sloan on 26 January 1981 Mr Abbott had made observations which could not have been made without foreknowledge of the Bill which Mr Prior (not then yet Secretary of State for Northern Ireland) was subsequently to introduce; I told you that Mr Abbott had said that the observations which he had made - which were not as reported by Mr Sloan - had not been based on a foreknowledge of Mr Prior's Bill, which was not at that time under consideration and of which he had no such



foreknowledge, but were related to proposals for "rolling devolution" which had been advanced some months earlier by Dr Brian Mawhinney and were in the public domain and on the table at Mr Atkins's conference which ended in the autumn of 1980).

5. These are of course serious charges. I am not privy to all the Secretary of State's dealings with his officials, and it must be for him to say whether he has reason to believe that his officials have been less than candid or less than fair, balanced and comprehensive in their provision of advice and information to him or in briefing him for discussions with his Ministerial colleagues, or less than unqualifiedly loyal to the policies of Her Majesty's Government in their dealings with representatives of the Irish Government in Dublin. But I accept that the charges, if well founded, would constitute a serious reflection on the professional integrity of the civil servants concerned and as such would be of much concern to me, as



the Joint Head of the Civil Service, as well as to the Prime Minister and to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

6. It is for the Secretary of State to answer for the policies and management of his Department and the conduct of his officials; but I have discussed the matter with him, as I told you I would, and with the Prime Minister. What follows is written on their authority and with their agreement.

7. At no time have Ministers of Her Majesty's Government taken the view or been advised by officials that their freedom of action with regard to constitutional arrangements for Northern Ireland is limited by agreements or understandings, open or secret, with the Irish Government. Ministers have not entered into any such agreements or understandings, and they have every confidence that officials of the Northern Ireland Office and of other Departments of Her Majesty's Government have not sought or made any such agreements or understandings with officials of the Irish Government.

*This is a special fact.*

*This is opinion - delete.*

8. There have of course been over the years many contacts at many levels and in many Departments between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Republic, which have had the objective either of improving co-operation between the two Governments on matters where such co-operation was or could be of common interest (notably on the question



of cross-border security and on economic links of various kinds), or more generally (and particularly between December 1980 and November 1981) of improving relations between the two Governments and between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. In the course of such contacts both Ministers and officials of the British Government have on occasion informed representatives of the Irish Government about political developments and prospects in Northern Ireland, and those representatives have expressed their views on those matters. [That that should happen is surely inevitable and hardly surprising, given the realities of life and the relationships which exist not only between the two Governments but also between each of them and various persons and parties in Northern Ireland; and perhaps it might be regarded by many as sensible and prudent, if the Government's policies in respect of Northern Ireland affairs are to be founded on as comprehensive a knowledge as possible of the relevant considerations.] It does



not follow, nor is it the case, that Her Majesty's Government, or officials of that Government, are in some sense dancing to the tune of the Irish Government.

9. Her Majesty's Government's objectives and intentions in proposing the establishment of an assembly in Northern Ireland were explained by the Secretary of State and his colleagues in the Parliamentary proceedings on the Bill to give effect to that proposal. The proposal was not made for the purpose of providing a Northern Ireland component for some Anglo-Irish inter-Parliamentary body. In any case, as the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have made clear, it is not for Governments but the Parliaments concerned to consider and decide whether or not such a body should be set up.

10. It is the fixed policy of Her Majesty's Government, and of Parliament, as enshrined in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, that there can and shall be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom except by the agreement of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. At all times this fact has informed and continues to inform the conduct of policy in the Northern Ireland Office and Her Majesty's Government's dealings with the Government of the Republic of Ireland.