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John Coles Esq
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LONDON SW1

Prime Minister

4 March 1983

A.J.C. 4/3

Dear John

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has seen a copy of Roger Bone's letter of 2 March about the resolutions of the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on Northern Ireland.

Mr Prior was glad to note the outcome of the conversations Mr Hurd had in Bonn and of Mr Onslow's meeting with Lady Elles. He is sure it is right, as UKREP advise, not to make a formal approach to Mr Rumor, but he is very happy that Sir Michael Butler should convey a personal message.

The Political Affairs Committee's initiative is unwarranted and unwelcome, and it is essential that the Government maintains the position it has adopted, which Mr Prior set out in the House last week. It is probable that the issue will be a matter of continuing legitimate public concern. The future course of events is not certain at the moment. We have already been told by Mr Rumor that the Committee will not hold public hearings. And it has been confirmed that the Parliament still considers itself bound by the 1981 resolution not to interfere in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. We do not want to excite the Parliament to do things which it would not otherwise do and we must not overlook the fact that if they do produce a report, however much we regret it, it is in our interest that it should be as little unhelpful as possible. Whatever the Parliament's lack of competence the report will be thought by some to carry a certain weight. So far, with the help of members of the EDG, we have managed fairly successfully to contain the European Parliament's interest in Northern Ireland affairs, and we do not want to weaken the long-term position of those who will continue to support our position. We should certainly consider any approach to member states or other action against that background.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Lord Chancellor, the Foreign Secretary, the Attorney-General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

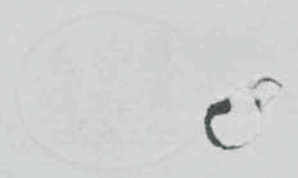
Yours ever

Derek A Hill

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 March 1983

European Parliament and Northern Ireland

The Prime Minister has noted the contents of your letter of 4 March in which you describe your Secretary of State's views on the initiative taken by the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Lord Chancellor, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Attorney General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

ALL COPIES

Derek Hill, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office

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FM COPENHAGEN 071810Z OF MARCH 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 63 OF 7 MARCH

INFO PRIORITY UKREP BRUSSELS ROUTINE OTHER EC POSTS AND UKDEL
STRASBOURG

YOUR TELNO 60 TO ROME: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND NORTHERN IRELAND

1. I SPOKE ON 6 MARCH WITH HAAGERUP, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE WORKING GROUP CONCERNED WITH NORTHERN IRELAND. IN THE LATTER CAPACITY HE HAS VISITED NORTHERN IRELAND TWO OR THREE TIMES RECENTLY. AS BACKGROUND, HE EMPHASISED HIS EFFORTS OVER SEVERAL YEARS TO CONTAIN AND TO MODERATE PRESSURES FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO TAKE AN ACTIVIST ROLE. HE HAD DRAFTED THE PARLIAMENT'S 1981 RESOLUTION WHICH KNOCKED OUT MORE RADICAL DRAFTS AND WHICH SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDED CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES FROM THE PARLIAMENT'S SCRUTINY: HE STOOD BY THIS. HAAGERUP HOWEVER, SAW NO CHANCE OF REVERSING THE DECISION TO REPORT (WHICH HE HAD NOT HIMSELF SUPPORTED). INDEED, HE FEARED THAT THE PARLIAMENT'S ACTIVITIES COULD TAKE A MORE DAMAGING PATH IF THEY WERE CHOKED BACK NOW. THE THREE MOTIONS IN QUESTION (IT HAS NOT YET DECIDED HOW HOW TO HANDLE THE FOURTH) HAD SUCCESSFULLY BEEN KEPT OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE MORE ACTIVIST LEGAL COMMITTEE, WHERE THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE BEEN RAISED. HAAGERUP SEES A REPORT AS REGRETTABLE BUT INEVITABLE, IF HE WERE TO WRITE IT, (AS IN HIS 1982 REPORT ON SECURITY) HE WOULD COVER SPECIFIC PROPOSALS ONLY IN THE BACKGROUND, CONFINING HIS RECOMMENDATIONS TO GENERAL PRINCIPLES EG NON-VIOLENCE. HE WOULD ENVISAGE THE REPORT APPEARING IN NOVEMBER/DECEMBER (HOPING IT WOULD NOT BECOME AN ELECTORAL ISSUE).

2. HAAGERUP HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER TO YEILD TO PRESSURES FROM HIS OWN LIBERALS AND OTHER GROUPS TO BECOME RAPPOREUR AND WILL PROBABLY NOT DO SO FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. HE SEEMED YESTERDAY TO BE IN TWO MINDS. HE LOOKS ON IT ALMOST AS A DUTY TO CONTINUE HIS WORK FOR MODERATION. BUT HE WILL LEAVE THE EP NEXT YEAR AND CLEARLY WONDERS WHETHER HE SHOULD NOW TAKE ON THIS DIFFICULT TASK. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT DO SO UNLESS HE FELT HE COULD STRENGTHEN THE CAUSE OF NON-VIOLENCE AND WAS ASSURED THAT HMG WOULD GIVE HIM SOME CO-OPERATION IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE WITHOUT GOING SO FAR AS TO LABEL HIM THEIR TOOL.

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3. I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TODAY TO SPEAK TO THE DANISH POLITICAL DIRECTOR (DYVIG) ABOUT OUR WISH THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO REPORT AND TO ASK HIM TO USE HIS INFLUENCE IN THAT DIRECTION. HE THOUGHT A REPORT UNAVOIDABLE AND TOOK THE VIEW THAT WE WOULD DO WELL IF HAAGERUP TOOK IT ON. MY OWN VIEW OF HAAGERUP (WHICH HIS COLLEAGUES AT THE RISS MIGHT CONFIRM) IS THAT, IF THERE MUST BE A REPORT, WE WOULD HAVE TO LOOK A LONG WAY TO FIND SOMEONE MORE ANXIOUS TO SOUND THE RIGHT NOTE AND BETTER EQUIPPED TO DO SO.

WARBURTON

LIMITED

ECD(1)

RID

LEGAL ADVISER

PS

PS/MR HURD

PS/MR ONSLOW

PS/PUS

SIR J BULLARD

MR EVANS

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MR HANNAY

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NO. 120 OF 04 MAR 83
INFO IMMEDIATE UKREP BRUSSELS AND ROUTINE PRIORITY OTHER EC POSTS

YOUR TELNO 059: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND NORTHERN IRELAND

1. RUMOR WAS LEAVING FOR HIS CONSTITUENCY AND COULD ONLY OFFER AN APPOINTMENT AT 10.00 HRS THIS MORNING. GIVEN HIS POSITION AS A FORMER PRIME MINISTER (FIVE TIMES), I DID NOT THINK IT WOULD BE RIGHT FOR ME TO CALL ON HIM BEFORE PRESENTING MY LETTERS WITHOUT CLEARING THIS WITH THE HEAD OF PROTOCOL (WHO IN TURN WOULD PROBABLY HAVE WISHED TO CONSULT THE FOREIGN MINISTER). THERE WAS SIMPLY NO TIME TO DO THIS AFTER YOUR TUR ARRIVED THIS MORNING AND I THEREFORE ASKED THE MINISTER TO MAKE THE CALL ON RUMOR. ORLEBAR EXPLAINED THE POSITION TO HIM AND MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WAS SPEAKING ON MY BEHALF.
2. ORLEBAR TOOK RUMOR THROUGH ALL THE POINTS IN YOUR ORAL MESSAGE. HE ADDED ON A PERSONAL BASIS THAT, HOWEVER WELL-INTENTIONED MIGHT BE THE ATTITUDE OF SOME OF THOSE WHO HAD VOTED IN FAVOUR OF A REPORT, ON PAST EXPERIENCE THE END RESULT COULD NOT POSSIBLY HELP TOWARDS A SOLUTION OF NORTHERN IRELAND'S PROBLEMS. NOR WAS IT EASY TO SEE HOW A PRECEDENT OF THIS SORT COULD BE WELCOME TO FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH THEIR OWN MINORITY PROBLEMS.
3. RUMOR PROVED TO BE FULLY ALIVE TO THE SENSITIVITIES AND DISPOSED TO BE AS HELPFUL AS HE COULD. HE REQUESTED THAT OUR APPROACH SHOULD BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL, IMPLYING THAT HE WOULD BE EMBARRASSED SHOULD IT BECOME KNOWN AND MIGHT BE FORCED TO TAKE UP A SOMEWHAT LESS HELPFUL POSITION IN PUBLIC. I HOPE WE CAN KEEP IT SO.
4. RUMOR REGRETTED THAT, WITH THE BEST WILL IN THE WORLD, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TO IGNORE ITS DECISION ON THE THREE RESOLUTIONS. BUT HIS ADVICE WAS TO PLAY THIS COOL AND LONG. NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN IN THE COMMITTEE UNTIL THE BUREAU OF THE PARLIAMENT HAD DECIDED WHETHER THE FOURTH (PAISLEY/TAYLOR) RESOLUTION SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO THE LEGAL COMMITTEE (WHICH HANDLES HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS AND HAS DEALT WITH EARLIER NORTHERN IRELAND RESOLUTIONS ON THIS SUBJECT) OR, LIKE THE OTHER THREE, TO THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. HE SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE TO OUR ADVANTAGE IF IT CAME TO THE LATTER COMMITTEE, WHERE IT WOULD BE LOGICAL TO GIVE IT PRECEDENCE OVER THE OTHER THREE RESOLUTIONS.

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(THIS INGENIOUS PROCEDURAL SUGGESTION MAY BE WORTH PURSUING).
5. RUMOR SAID THAT THE COMMITTEE'S POINT OF REFERENCE WOULD BE THE RESOLUTION OF MAY 1981, AND HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT IT WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO PRONOUNCE ON CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS. IN STRASBOURG HE WOULD DISCUSS THE POSITION IN CONFIDENCE WITH LORD O'HAGAN, LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP ON THE COMMITTEE AND STILL (HE THOUGHT) CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF GROUP LEADERS WHICH WOULD APPOINT THE RAPPORTEUR. THIS FACT SHOULD HELP ENSURE A SENSIBLE APPOINTMENT, SUCH AS HAGGERUP (UKREP BRUSSELS TELNO 785).

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