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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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Charles Powell Esq
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SW1

29th November 1984

Prime Minister (2)

Dear Charles,

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

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The Secretary of State suggests that the Prime Minister might like to see the attached note of a meeting he had with Dr Paisley and Mr Peter Robinson on 28 November. The discussion revealed a certain amount about current political attitudes within Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State also met recently the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland. The LCJ volunteered that he would be wholly opposed to any suggestions for mixed courts involving judges from the North and South of Ireland sitting together. This was on two counts. First, the LCJ was opposed in any case to increasing the number of judges in the jury-less Diplock Courts from one to three. Secondly, he thought that the involvement of judges from the Republic would be bound to introduce an undesirable political element into the judicial process.

Copies of this letter and enclosure go for information to Len Appleyard (FCO) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

Graham Sandiford

G K SANDIFORD

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NOTE OF A MEETING WITH DR PAISLEY AND MR ROBINSON ON 28 NOVEMBER 1984

Present: Secretary of State
Dr Ian Paisley MP
Mr Peter Robinson MP
Mr Andrew
Mr Sandiford

The Secretary of State said that it was clear, in the wake of the Anglo-Irish Summit, both that the constitutional guarantee remained and that none of the three main proposals in the Forum Report were acceptable to HMG. Since the line had been so clearly drawn, he thought that Unionists should feel free to make constructive political progress. He was rather dismayed by the triumphalism of Unionist reactions so far. He regretted the tone of Dr Paisley's attack on Bishop Cahal Daly as the "black Pope of the republican movement". He did not agree with all that Bishop Daly himself had said, but felt that the intemperate tone of Dr Paisley's attack sat oddly with his professed readiness to have constructive discussion with other party leaders.

2. Dr Paisley said that Bishop Daly's recent statements were deeply offensive. For example, the Bishop had said that the British handling of the Summit had played into the hands of the IRA, and that Roman Catholics had no rights or justice in Northern Ireland. The Bishop had also asserted that the British had no more right to a presence in Northern Ireland than the Government of the Republic. This went to the very quick of the issue, and Dr Paisley thought it right to reject robustly any such expression of view.

3. As to talks with other party leaders, Dr Paisley said that he had urged Mr Hume during the summer to start talking with other political leaders in Northern Ireland. Mr Hume had said that he must wait for the results of the Summit. After the Summit, Dr Paisley had not made any triumphalist statements. He had had a long conversation with Mr Hume on 23 November. He had told Mr Hume that, despite his commitment to the Assembly, he was ready to discuss with Mr Hume outside the Assembly how a way forward might be found. Mr Hume had

agreed to this, but had said that he must first discuss matters with the Irish Government and get through his Party Conference. Dr Paisley had warned Mr Hume that statements by Mr Mallon (the SDLP deputy leader) that Dublin must have a pivotal role were bound - if persisted with - to impede Unionist co-operation. Dr Paisley accepted that a settlement in Northern Ireland was bound to have to take into account the position of the Irish Government, but to ascribe to that Government a pivotal role was too much.

4. Dr Paisley said that he and his party colleagues did, however, propose to seek bi-lateral talks with each of the other main parties in Northern Ireland, including the SDLP. He would wish Mr Hume to be accompanied by other SDLP leaders, since Dr Paisley was not confident of Mr Hume's ability to deliver his own party. Dr Paisley thought that it would be necessary to let it be known in Northern Ireland that such discussions were taking place on an exploratory basis, without issuing statements about the substance of the discussions.

5. Mr Robinson commented that the recent statement by the devolution committee of the Assembly had sought to be conciliatory. The Committee had invited Bishop Daly to come and explain his views on alienation. They had also written again to Mr Hume, asking him to meet the committee even though he was not a participant in the Assembly. Moreover, members of each party represented in the committee had agreed individually to seek separate meetings with the SDLP. Mr Robinson added that these were, however, difficult days for the SDLP. There were rumours of moves within the SDLP to resign their Assembly seats (which they had never taken) en bloc.

6. The Secretary of State commented that the moves reported by Dr Paisley and Mr Robinson sounded very reasonable. He wondered, however, what substantive ground it was hoped to cover in talks.

7. Dr Paisley said that Mr Hume was still in a difficult mood. Dr Paisley had urged him to agree to start by exploring areas of

common ground, such as the economy. If there were not sufficient goodwill to make progress on bread and butter issues, there would be no hope at all of making progress on the larger issues, with their history of deep political enmity. Mr Robinson said that he would prefer to explore immediately whether the SDLP were yet ready to face the basic issues. Any talks would be exploratory, and he did not yet see how it would be possible to move from such talks to established negotiating positions.

8. The Secretary of State made three points. First, while he could see the case for discussing other matters than the constitutional issue, he hoped that the big questions would not be deferred too long. Secondly, while he did not currently propose to summon any meeting of the parties, or to table any plan of his own, he would be very ready to help the discussion process if the parties thought that would be helpful at any stage. Thirdly, he thought that the work of the Assembly's report committee was very important for the future of the Assembly, and that the committee now had better opportunities to take account of the views of the SDLP. Although the Secretary of State had not said publicly, he thought it right to say privately that it seemed inconceivable that the Assembly should go on indefinitely if its activity was restricted to a scrutinising role only.

9. Dr Paisley and Mr Robinson said that the Secretary of State should think very carefully before contemplating the end of the Assembly, unless he had something better to put in its place. Irish politicians would conduct their politics wherever they could, and were able to conduct politics in the streets (as had been seen before) if an Assembly were not available. In any case, they had every wish to see the Assembly develop. The report committee was considering a possible mix of the ideas of the different parties, combined with possible ways of accommodating the Irishness of the minority community without necessarily setting up new structures to that end. Dr Paisley and Mr Robinson said that Mr Hume still harboured hopes that the next Summit might lead to some measure of joint authority. They asked the Secretary of State to make clear to Mr Hume that that was not in prospect. Only if Mr Hume were

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persuaded that he had nowhere else to go would he turn constructively to discussion on the future of the Assembly. Dr Paisley and Mr Robinson said that they sincerely wished to know the views of the SDLP, so that they could be taken into account in proposals for the future of the Assembly. It would be intolerable, however, if the Assembly were brought to an end either through SDLP resignations en bloc, or because proposals for development - however reasonable - were rejected by the British Government on the grounds that the SDLP had not endorsed them.

10. The Secretary of State said that he certainly wished to see the Assembly succeed. He thought that the opportunities for constructive discussion were now greater than they had been, and welcomed the DUP leaders' readiness to seek talks with the other parties.

Graham Sandiford

G K SANDIFORD

29 November 1984

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