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Prime Minister,

Agree that the Northern Ireland  
Secretary may issue the attached  
statement tomorrow?

PRIME MINISTER

FORUM REPORT

*Wm* A.J.C. 1/5

The draft which Dr FitzGerald sent you at the weekend was an improvement on the earlier version with several of the more offensive phrases omitted or softened and a new passage on consent which was much more satisfactory. We now know that in the final version which will be published tomorrow some of the improvements have been lost. There is no reason to revise the view in my minute of 26 April that the Report is disappointing.

The Irish would like us to say very little and leave them to make the running. Although others will make many of the necessary criticisms, I am sure the Government must establish its own position firmly though tactfully. I attach a statement on these lines, which I would propose to issue tomorrow very shortly after the Report is published when I will also see a selected group from the Lobby and be available for brief television interviews. The text, which has been largely agreed by the group of officials chaired by Cabinet Office and which I discussed with Geoffrey Howe, focusses on the crucial question of consent. It may need last minute revision when we have the full final text of the Report itself.

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You/....



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You are almost bound to be asked about the Report at Question Time on Thursday, and material will be provided in the light of reaction on publication day.

I am copying this to Geoffrey Howe and Robert Armstrong.

*Derek Hill*

J P

1 May 1984

(Approved by the Secretary of State  
and signed in his absence)

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

1 May 1984

Forum Report

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 1 May and agrees that, subject to any last minute revision which may be necessary in the light of the final text of the Forum Report, Mr. Prior should issue on 2 May the statement annexed to his minute.

I am copying this letter to Peter Ricketts (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

A J COLES

John Lyon, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

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