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From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref. A084/2290

6 August 1984

Dear Robert,

Thank you for your letter of 2 August about the invitation which your Secretary of State has received to visit Dublin before he leaves office.

We discussed this on the telephone. I have now consulted the Prime Minister. She agrees that Mr Prior should go, but wishes very careful attention to be paid to public handling of the visit. She has commented that it is not to be called a farewell visit because other arrangements will still be in the air. She has asked that we should devise a line that both avoids reference to a farewell visit and does not give rise to speculation about some initiative on Irish affairs as a result of the coincidence in time between Mr Prior's visit to Dublin and the Taoiseach's visit to London. The Prime Minister would like to see the line proposed before a commitment is taken on.

This is clearly a difficult and delicate line to find. I think that you will have to say something like that the Secretary of State has accepted Mr Barry's invitation to pay a courtesy visit to Dublin at the end of August; that this visit is in no way linked to the Taoiseach's visit to the Prime Minister on 3 September to discuss European Community affairs; and that it has no other particular significance. No doubt the press will assume that it is in fact a farewell visit, even if we do not actually say so.

Perhaps I could leave you to think further about the line to be followed, and to clear something with 10 Downing Street when a decision has been made.

I am sending a copy of this letter to **Charles Powell**.

Yours ever
Robert

R. J. Andrew Esq CB

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DB ro 9
note that
N.I.O. will
come forward
with a line.

CDP/12