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From the Private Secretary

22 November 1985

Dear Jim,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR. JOHN CUSHNAHAN

The Prime Minister had a talk this morning with Mr. Cushnahan, leader of the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Secretary was also present.

Mr. Cushnahan made plain that he did not agree with the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He thought it was one-sided. But he could see that the Government had been forced into it by the crass stupidity of the Unionists. Now that it was there, he understood that it was his duty to run with it even though this caused problems in his Party. He had put his leadership on the line.

Mr. Cushnahan continued that he thought much of the very strong concern in the Protestant community stemmed from the secrecy which had accompanied the negotiations and the lack of consultation with the Protestant majority. He thought it important that the Government should now take action to counteract the feeling on the part of the majority that they were being excluded. He had a number of suggestions.

Firstly, he would find it very valuable if the Prime Minister could give him a clear assurance that the intergovernmental conference would have no executive authority and that there was no intention to give it such authority in the future. It must be clear that the Agreement was not simply preparing the ground for joint authority. Secondly, he thought that the Government should publish the agendas of the intergovernmental conference and make some sort of statement afterwards. This would give the Assembly a chance to make comments. The Assembly could have a useful role and to some extent act as a counter-balance to the conference. Thirdly, he hoped that the question of mixed courts could be dealt with at the first meeting of the intergovernmental conference with further discussion in effect postponed sine die. This would make clear that there was no likelihood of any early progress towards such courts. Fourthly, pressure should be brought on the SDLP to give some assurances to the Protestant community of their readiness to take an active part in moves towards establishing devolved government. It was time for the SDLP to be generous. Finally, it would be very valuable indeed if the intergovernmental conference could come up with early agreement between the Government and the Republic on joint

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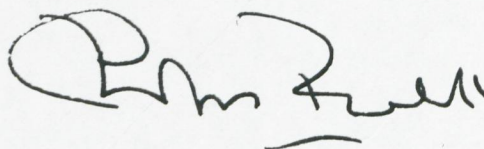
measures against Sinn Fein. This would be an all-Ireland approach.

The Prime Minister said that she found all Mr. Cushnahan's points of interest. She could give him an unqualified assurance about the role of the intergovernmental conference. She could also say that the Government were considering the question of providing reassurance to the Protestant community that their concerns would be taken into account. She hoped to be in a position to make some practical suggestions quite soon. Mr. Cushnahan asked whether the Prime Minister could record these points in a letter to him. The Prime Minister agreed to do so and handed Mr. Cushnahan the enclosed letter. It was agreed that it would be made public at 3 pm this afternoon.

The Prime Minister has sent copies of her letter to Mr. Cushnahan to Mr. Molyneaux and to Dr. Paisley inviting them to make suggestions on the subjects mentioned. She would also like the Irish Government to be shown a copy of the letter as soon as possible. I should be grateful if the Foreign Office could arrange for it to be telegraphed to Dublin.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President, the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Lord Privy Seal and the Chief Whip.

Yours sincerely,



(C.D. POWELL)

Jim Daniell, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

22 November 1985

You requested a meeting with me urgently and I gladly agreed. At our meeting today you asked me for a clear assurance that the Inter-Governmental Conference to be established under the Anglo-Irish Agreement would have no executive authority, and that there was no intention to give it such authority in future. I gladly give you an unqualified assurance on this point.

You also raised your misgivings about the absence of any mechanism for the traditional majority in Northern Ireland to make its views known on the matters within the scope of the Inter-Governmental Conference, and the lack of clear arrangements for keeping them informed about the Conference's discussions. As I told you, the Government is giving these questions serious consideration and I hope to be able to be in a position to make some practical suggestions soon.

With best wishes,

John Cushnahan, Esq.