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PRIME MINISTER

MEETING WITH THE TAOISEACH

I enclose a speaking note for your meeting with the Taoiseach.

You will wish to consider whether the Unionist reaction does not justify going somewhat further with the Taoiseach than the speaking note suggests, though without giving the impression that you are backing out of the Agreement. Additional points which you might raise are:

(i) the way matters have turned out we have a much bigger problem than the Republic does. The prime need is to lean over backwards to reassure the Unionists, while leaving no impression of weakness or lack of determination to implement the Agreement;

(ii) you are grateful for the Taoiseach's helpful remarks in the debate, in the Times and on television;

(iii) an early and visible improvement in security cooperation would make a great impression. We need something eye-catching. An intensified effort to apprehend PIRA fugitives in the Republic?

(iv) it would also be helpful if the Irish Government could take very early action to start their parliamentary processes on accession to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism;

(v) we also need more from the SDLP. John Hume has made some helpful remarks but they have been rather vague and qualified. We really need a firm and specific offer by the SDLP on the steps which they are prepared to take towards devolution;

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(vi) we must also ask the Republic to heed our advice on the location of meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference in the early stages. The first meeting may have to be in Aldergrove. The second meeting might be in London or the Republic. (It will probably be shortly before the by-elections.)

(vii) nothing would do more to cut the ground from under the Unionists' feet than some indication that the Republic would be prepared to consider amendment of Article 2 and 3 of its Constitution. (But you may feel that it is going too far to mention this to the Taoiseach now.)

C.D.P.

(C.D. POWELL)

29 November 1985

SRWALO

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SPEAKING NOTE

Both the UK and Irish Parliaments have now approved the Agreement and we have exchanged notifications of their approval. The Agreement is therefore now in force. We must now see that it produces the peace and stability we hope for.

2. The reaction of the Unionists to the Agreement was more hostile than, perhaps, we expected. We have been obliged to defend the Agreement. We have repeated in particular that there is no derogation from our sovereignty and that we retain responsibility for decisions and administration of government in Northern Ireland. We have also emphasised the improvement in cross-border security which we hope will flow from the Agreement.

3. The Unionists clearly hope to wear down our commitment to the Agreement by a series of measures - by-elections first, which may be followed by boycotts and other forms of protest. They do not at present envisage unconstitutional action, which we should welcome. There is no reason to think that their opposition will be easily overcome.

4. It would not be right - constitutionally and politically - to intervene in the by-election process and, if all the resignations take place, the by-elections should take place in February ^(or even late January). But we will not accept that they amount to any kind of referendum.

5. All Ministers are to undertake a major effort to reassure Unionists - particularly moderate unionist opinion. We will make it clear that - so long as a majority wishes to stay in the United Kingdom - they are welcome and wanted. They will not have any special or ambivalent status.

6. But to gain Unionist support for the Agreement, we must also make sure that the Intergovernmental Conference has, and is seen to have, advantages for them as well as the minority. Improvements in security as a result of the Conference may not come overnight; but we must convince the Unionists that they will come. And the more the Unionists can be reassured about the security the more

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successfully we can take the steps to accommodate the rights and identity of the minority. I am glad, that, as a small first step, Sir John Hermon and Commissioner Wren are meeting.

7. We also need to assure the Unionists that the work of the Conference will not go on behind their backs. We would like to consult them about the Conference's work although there can be no question of having a veto. We would also wish to report to Parliament. We know, however, that some of the matters discussed in the Conference will be confidential. We have not made any decision yet, and will inform you before we make any announcement. We would hope that we can agree a common approach to Northern Ireland politicians, and our Parliaments.

8. The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference is likely to be on 11 December. We should keep the date confidential. This will be an opportunity (as our Communique indicated) to be seen to be making progress on security co-operation as well as the improvement of relations between the security forces and the minority community.

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MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE TAOISEACH

PRESS STATEMENT

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach reviewed the position following the signature of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. They confirmed that the Agreement would be implemented as planned. They recognised the concern about the Agreement among the Unionist community. They hoped that the community would come to understand the reassurance on the status of Northern Ireland and other matters which the Agreement offers.