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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 March 1985

Exchange of letters with Dr. Paisley

I wrote to you earlier today with the suggestion as to how Mr. Patten's reply to Dr. Paisley's recent letter might be amended and we subsequently spoke about it.

This is to confirm that the Prime Minister is content with the form of words which I proposed (with "shall be" replaced by "am").

I am copying this letter to Colin Budd (FCO) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

(Charles Powell)

Neil Ward, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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bc PC

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 March 1985

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WITH DR. PAISLEY

Thank you for your letter of 27 March enclosing Mr. Patten's proposed reply to Dr. Paisley's recent letter.

The Prime Minister is concerned that the words "solely internal" at the end of the second paragraph of the proposed reply could be misleading against the background of our contacts with the Irish Government and our efforts to persuade them that they should exercise their influence with the nationalist minority to take part in these talks.

I do not see an easy way round this. I suppose that one could say: "I can readily confirm that the talks which I shall be conducting are internal to Northern Ireland". You will no doubt wish to reflect further on the point and let me know what your Ministers decide.

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

(C. D. POWELL)

Neil Ward, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

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Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

27th March 1985

I think the term 'solely internal' could be misleading. It is a possibility - perhaps not.

*Prime Minister
Agree to Mr. Patten's reply?*

*CDP
27/3*

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WITH DR PAISLEY

.... Following the first meeting between Dr Paisley and Mr Chris Patten, in his role as the Secretary of State's representative, Dr Paisley has written to Mr Patten expressing alarm at the discussions with the Irish Government. A copy of the letter is attached. It has been published by Dr Paisley.

Specifically Dr Paisley asks for written clarification from Mr Patten that the talks which he wishes to engage in are solely internal to Northern Ireland and not part of a three way process with Dublin. Dr Paisley also seeks assurances that negotiations are not taking place with the Irish over the future government of Northern Ireland.

.... The Secretary of State has been consulted on the terms of a reply and I attach the proposed response. We believe Dr Paisley wants to continue talks with Mr Patten and would be content with a reply on these lines. The Foreign Secretary has seen the draft and is content with it. As Mr Patten's letter is likely to be given fairly widespread coverage in the media, and given the nature of assurances sought I should be grateful for confirmation, by telephone if possible, that the Prime Minister would be content for Mr Patten to write as drafted.

I am copying this letter and enclosures to Colin Budd and Richard Hatfield.

*Yours sincerely
Neil Ward*

N D WARD



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Chris Patten Esq., M.P.,
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Stormont Castle
BELFAST.

25th March, 1985.

Dear Minister,

The D.U.P. holds tenaciously to the stance formerly enunciated by the Prime Minister as that of her Government, namely that the affairs and future of Northern Ireland are a matter solely for H.M.G., the Parliament of the U.K. and the people of Northern Ireland. As there are many alarming signs that the Government has forsaken this stance in favour of one which involves a foreign Government, that of the Irish Republic, in shaping the affairs and future of Northern Ireland, we require written clarification from you that the talks which you wish to engage us in are solely internal to Northern Ireland and are not in any sense part of a three-way process with Dublin.

Furthermore recent speculation, the substance of which the Government has not denied, indicates that the Government is presently engaged in negotiating with the Dublin Government a so called settlement affecting the future arrangements of Government within Northern Ireland. If this is so then it is an act of gross betrayal of the British people of Northern Ireland and I promise you will meet with relentless opposition from them in which I and my Party will see it as our duty and privilege to play a leading role. Before entering any talks with you we require an unequivocal assurance in writing that no such negotiations are taking place with the Dublin Government concerning the future government of N.I. If such negotiations are proceeding then the government is choosing collision rather than dialogue with the Unionist people of Northern Ireland, and that is what you can expect.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

If you cannot give us such guarantees then we will not be holding any talks with you for the D.U.P. has no intention of being drawn into a scenario of negotiations with Dublin either directly or indirectly. We will not be pawns in any London/Dublin process.

When you are in a position to give us the written and unambiguous assurances which we seek then we look forward to discussions with you. Though I must warn you that any subsequent breach of assurances given by you will result in an immediate termination of all talks. Just as we are not prepared to stand by and see our constitutional position undermined and prejudiced so we as a Party are not prepared to be trifled with.

Sincerely,

John Paisley

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DRAFT LETTER

FILE NUMBER.....

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE.....

To

Enclosures

Copies to be sent to

The Rev Dr Ian Paisley MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

(Full Postal Address)

(Full Address, if Necessary)

LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY MR PATTEN
(Name of Signatory)

Thank you for your letter of 25 March.

My talks are to explore with the constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland their views on the prospects for the future government and administration of the Province, and in particular the prospects for the devolution of power on a basis which would be widely acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland. I can readily confirm that they are solely internal to Northern Ireland.

The basis of the conduct of the UK Government's relations with the Irish Republic was last set out in the communique following last November's summit which states that there would be close and continuing dialogue between the two Governments.

That dialogue has continued on the basis set out in the summit communique. In particular, the communique reaffirmed that there should be no change in the constitutional status of

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Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom without the consent of the majority of the people of Northern. It is well understood by the Irish Government that that remains the position of HMG and that there will be no change in it.

I have, of course, consulted Douglas Hurd before writing to you in these terms.

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