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PRIME MINISTER

Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland: Revised British Proposal

1. I have seen Sir Robert Armstrong's submission to you of 3 June enclosing the revised text of the British proposal following our meeting in OD(I) on 23 May. I am content with the proposed revisions, and I agree with Sir Robert that we should aim to get our revised text to the Irish as soon as possible.
2. Sir Robert's arguments for not including a clause specifically providing for suspending or terminating the activities of the Standing Intergovernmental Committee are persuasive. The key point is that we cannot realistically expect to be able to negotiate a clause which would allow us to withdraw from that part of the agreement to which the Irish attach most importance, while holding them without the possibility of escape to the part to which we attach importance. I believe that if we tried to do this there would be a real risk that the Irish would either break off the negotiations altogether or at the very least demand that the termination clause should apply to the whole of the agreement. It would clearly not be in our interests if, having obtained Irish endorsement of our position on the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom in Section II of the agreement, we were explicitly to provide the means for either party to denounce it.
3. I understand that officials made considerable efforts to devise a means of including suspension or termination of the activities of the Committee by implication. But they concluded that it was not possible to go beyond the wording which



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Sir Robert Armstrong has put forward in his new paragraph 4 without making our intentions so obvious that it would have no advantage over an explicit provision. I think that this reasoning is correct. In practice, if relations between London and Dublin were to deteriorate beyond a certain point, the Committee would almost certainly cease to operate. But I do not consider that it would be either prudent or necessary to include a provision to that effect. Even without such a provision, the Irish are likely to have considerable difficulties with our revised text, and the withdrawal of our earlier offer of a Joint Secretariat located in Belfast is bound to revive their suspicions about our good faith. To propose in addition a provision enabling us unilaterally to deprive them of the Joint Standing Committee would make them wonder whether we were serious at all.

4. I am sending copies of this minute to the other members of OD(I) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*CR Budd (Private Secretary)*

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

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

5 June 1985

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