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COO. WK

PRIME MINISTER

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

The purpose of the meeting is to consider the next step in the light of the Northern Ireland Secretary's recent minute. The main documents are:-

- A - The text of the draft Agreement and proposed press line.
- B - The Northern Ireland Secretary's minute.
- C - The Foreign Secretary's comment.
- D - Sir Robert Armstrong's account of the latest round of negotiations.

There are four main areas which need discussion:-

- i. is it the case that the balance of the Agreement as it stands is heavily in favour of the Irish? If so, what is required to re-establish a reasonable balance:
  - reinstatement of the Irish Government's commitment to ratify the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism?
  - correction of the text of the agreement to remove any ambiguity about the Irish Government's role in the North? (This covers Mr King's proposed textual amendments as well as his point about the different titles of the British and Irish texts.)
  - a firmer commitment outside the agreement that the SDLP will co-operate in moves to re-establish devolved government?

- a clearer understanding on the exact role of the permanent secretariat? Should we try to reach a written understanding with the Irish Government on this?
- a way of conveying clearly and publicly that the Irish Government will not have an executive role in the North (bearing in mind Irish difficulties over the word 'consultative').

[RTA's note  
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- ii. how can these points best be handled with the Irish? Should the Northern Ireland Secretary and the Foreign Secretary have an early meeting with Irish Ministers to raise the negotiations to a political level?
- iii. should we give the Irish side a new target date for a possible Anglo-Irish Summit? (Friday 15 November is the next available date in your diary.) Or should we avoid specifying a date until after Ministers have met their Irish counterparts and you have assessed the results? There is much to be said for not imposing a negotiating deadline upon oneself. But will failure to set a date lead the Irish to conclude that we are backing out?
- iv. in the light of the answers to these points, should we start contingency planning on the best possible presentation of our case in the event of a breakdown (with an eye particularly to the United States)?

You may also want to consider the enclosed letter just received from Mr. Molyneaux and Dr. Paisley.

C.D.P.

Charles Powell  
1 October 1985