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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
WHITEHALL  
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Charles Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street  
London

CDP  
S/A

8 October 1985

Dear Charles,

FILE WITH CDP.

Thank you for your letter of 7 October. I am writing to confirm that my Secretary of State is content with the revised letters to Mr Molyneaux and Dr Paisley, subject to the deletion of the word 'once' in the first line of the third paragraph of each letter.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Duke-Evans

J B DUKE-EVANS  
Assistant Private Secretary



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

7 October 1985

*Please verify  
both letters*

Thank you for your letter enclosing draft replies from the Prime Minister to Mr. Molyneux and Dr. Paisley. The Prime Minister would much prefer to write more briefly since there is nothing new to say. I enclose copies of the letters which she signed before leaving for the Party Conference. I have not yet despatched them in case your Secretary of State feels very strongly that fuller replies are needed. I should be grateful if you would let me know urgently whether he is content. We will then go ahead with the arrangements for a meeting on 30 October.

Charles Powell

J.B. Duke-Evans, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
WHITEHALL  
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Charles Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

7 October 1985

*Dear Charles,*

At their meeting with the Prime Minister on 30 August, Mr Molyneaux and Dr Paisley handed over a letter expressing their concern at the current Anglo-Irish talks, but recording that their Parties were prepared to contribute to a new Anglo-Irish process under very restrictive conditions, and that they were also willing to consider reasonable proposals for the protection of minority interests (short of SDLP membership of a devolved Northern Ireland government). To this letter the Prime Minister replied on 13 September reaffirming her own and the Government's commitment to the Anglo-Irish dialogue but reassuring the Unionists that there was no threat either to the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, or the United Kingdom sovereignty over the Province. She also reminded her correspondents that the Irish had accepted that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland could not change without the consent of a majority there, and finally invited the Unionists to submit any proposals they had for devolved government that would be acceptable across the community.

The Unionists' reply of 30 September shows that they have not been satisfied by the Prime Minister's reassurance, and they have pressed her further on a number of detailed points, including some covered in general terms in her earlier letter. The Prime Minister's reply to this latest letter is certain to be published by the Unionists, like the earlier correspondence.

Officials are preparing, in the context of the Anglo-Irish talks, detailed briefing to assist Ministers in dealing with all the points, however recondite or sophisticated, that will no doubt be put to them if an Agreement is reached. However, without violating the confidentiality of our discussions, there seems no way in which the Prime Minister could deal fully with the points the Unionists have raised on this occasion. In any case it is not in our interests to conduct the debate on their

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terms. The Government has consistently made it clear that we are pursuing a closer relationship with the Irish Republic in the interests of both communities (as well as of the United Kingdom generally) and, in her last letter, the Prime Minister personally reaffirmed that our talks posed no threat to fundamental and legitimate Unionist concerns. Moreover, while one may have sympathy with the uncertainty generated in the majority community as a result of our protracted negotiations, Mr Molyneaux and Dr Paisley's refusal both to grasp the reasons for confidentiality is much less attractive, as are their coat trailing references to the Pope's being better informed about the conduct of negotiations than themselves.

For these reasons, therefore, I attach a draft letter for the Prime Minister's signature which briefly reaffirms what the Prime Minister has already said, but offers a principled refusal to be drawn in ways that would neither serve our interests in the present negotiations, but indeed, by fuelling speculation, could help raise the political temperature in Northern Ireland.

You will also see that the draft suggests the Prime Minister should agree to the Unionists' request to meet her. I realise the Prime Minister's diary is particularly full between now and a likely Summit, and you have told me that any date before 30 October (by when a final decision on an Agreement will almost certainly have been taken) is out of the question. If so, the Secretary of State would not wish to press the Prime Minister especially since the Unionists are unlikely to be convinced by anything she has to say, while the Prime Minister for her part is quite likely to be bombarded with the sort of detailed questions contained in the latest letter. On the other hand, there are distinct presentational advantages in agreeing to meet Mr Molyneaux and Dr Paisley as far before the Summit as can be arranged and at your suggestion the draft explains why no immediate meeting is possible. In particular, the Prime Minister will not then be seen to have turned away the Unionist leaders unheard, and it will be correspondingly harder for them to argue that the SDLP has received altogether more sympathetic treatment from the Irish authorities. The Prime Minister will not want, however, if she decides to meet the Unionists, to give the impression that they are being consulted or that their approval for an Agreement is being sought.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely,*

*Jonathan Duke-Evans*

J B DUKE-EVANS

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