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10 DOWNING STREET

29 October, 1985

From the Private Secretary

Dear Jim,

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister held a meeting this morning with the Northern Ireland Secretary and the Foreign Secretary to discuss issues in the current negotiations with the Irish Government, summarised in Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 28 October; and a number of matters connected with the arrangements for concluding and presenting an agreement set out in Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 25 October. Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Percy Cradock were also present.

Issues in the negotiations

The following points were agreed:

- the reference to the possibility of mixed courts in Article 8 of the draft agreement should remain. But the Irish Government should be forewarned that in presenting the agreement to Parliament and the press, the Prime Minister would spell out the various caveats which she had put to the Taoiseach in her letter of 4 October.

- as regards Irish accession to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, it must be made clear to the Irish that a firm commitment to accession was required as evidence of their bona fides in tackling terrorism. Alternative formulations would be either: "The Irish Government will introduce and support legislation ..." or "Having regard to the Agreement, the Irish Government intend to accede ..." We could not accept any further qualification or conditions about changes in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland.

- the changes proposed in Sir Robert Armstrong's minute to Articles 2(a) and (b), Article 3, Article 4(a)(iii) were accepted.

- it was agreed that the formulation preferred by the Northern Ireland Secretary for Article 4(c) should be pursued vigorously with the Northern Ireland government. As a fallback, the formulation proposed by Sir Robert Armstrong could be accepted.

- the amendment proposed by the Northern Ireland Secretary to Article 7(d) should be put to the Irish Government, as should his amendments to paragraphs 7,8 and 9 of the draft Communique.

- the term "Intergovernmental Conference" was accepted.

Procedure and Presentation

It was agreed that there should be a joint summary of the Agreement and a joint press conference. The Prime Minister will herself make a Statement in the House on 18 November. This will require a change in the date of the Anglo-French Summit, about which I have written to you. A White Paper containing details of the Agreement should be laid before the House on the day the Agreement is signed. The Prime Minister will herself open the debate in the House. It was recognised that there might be problems over briefing the Leaders of the Labour, Liberal and Social Democrat Parties the day before the Agreement is signed but the Leaders of the Northern Ireland parties only on the day itself. This requires further thought. Finally as regards the location of the Anglo/Irish Summit, it was agreed that Sir Robert Armstrong should put to the Irish government the advantages from the security point of view of RAF Aldegrave. The Prime Minister specifically ruled out Shannon as a possible site.

Cabinet will discuss the point reached in the negotiations on 31 October, with the possibility of a further round of discussion on 7 November.

I am copying this letter to Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*your diary,
C.D. Powell*

(C.D. Powell)

J. Daniell, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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