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From the Private Secretary

19 October 1984

ANGLO/IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister has considered the points raised in the minutes by your Secretary of State, by the Foreign Secretary and by Sir Robert Armstrong on what should be said to the Northern Ireland parties about the ground being covered in the confidential exchanges with the Irish Government.

The Prime Minister has commented that the terrorist bomb in Brighton has slowed these confidential talks down and may, if it turns out to be the first in a series, kill the initiative altogether. This clearly has implications for how much is said to the Northern Ireland parties.

The Prime Minister also recalls that Dr. FitzGerald has been particularly insistent that there should be no leak about the confidential exchanges. She is concerned not to incur any suggestion of bad faith. She therefore thinks that he (or Mr. Barry) should be told in advance of what Mr. Hurd intends to say to the parties in the North, and his agreement obtained.

As to what should be said, the Prime Minister thinks that Mr. Hurd might test the Northern Ireland parties' reactions to some of the ideas which have emerged in the course of the confidential exchanges. But he should do so in the context of taking further the talks which he has already started with them, rather than linking them to the forthcoming summit or to talks with the Irish Government. This means in practice being even more cautious than Mr. Hurd suggests in his minute. For instance the phrase "I do not know what will emerge from the Summit" should be dropped, as should the last three lines of the penultimate sentence of that paragraph, since the phrases in question raise the very fears which they seek to allay. The Prime Minister also agrees with the comments made by the Foreign Secretary.

I should be grateful if a revised Line to Take with the Northern Ireland parties could be prepared, taking

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account of these points, for the Prime Minister to see early next week.

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

(C.D. POWELL)

Graham Sandiford, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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