



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

27 February 1986

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CO (Mallaby)

My dear Archbishop,

Our discussion yesterday, when you brought to Downing Street a delegation of Bishops from the Church of Ireland, prompts me to write to you setting out the main elements of the Government's policy on Northern Ireland at the present difficult juncture. I shall do so in five points.

1. The Government wants Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. The Anglo-Irish Agreement in no way undermines the Union. In fact, Article 1 strengthens the Union, by reinforcing the guarantee that the status of Northern Ireland cannot change unless a majority of the people there so wish. The Agreement makes it absolutely clear that all the decisions of government in Northern Ireland remain with the United Kingdom Government. The Agreement also promises benefits for all the people of Northern Ireland, by reducing the level of violence and promoting stability and reconciliation there on a basis of equal rights. Benefits in the struggle against terrorism are already being achieved. Everyone in Northern Ireland should take note of these central points and should not be misled by irresponsible misrepresentations of the Agreement.

2. The Government realises that many unionists nevertheless dislike the Agreement and the Intergovernmental Conference which it established. I

understand these feelings. But I do not think that they realise that it lies in the hands of the people in the Province, through their elected representatives, to reduce the range of the Intergovernmental Conference's work by entering into arrangements for a devolved administration in a form which is widely acceptable in the Province. Matters which were devolved to such a Northern Ireland administration would no longer be for discussion in the Intergovernmental Conference: the Agreement itself says that. When Mr. Molyneux and Dr. Paisley visited me on 25 February, I readily agreed to consider their suggestion of a Round Table conference (separate from the Intergovernmental Conference) to discuss devolution, and to explore this idea with the leaders of other Northern Ireland parties.

3. I also made other suggestions to Mr. Molyneux and Dr. Paisley which were designed to take account of unionist concerns. I offered:

- New arrangements for consultation between the Government and unionist leaders about affairs in Northern Ireland, and not only those being discussed in the Intergovernmental Conference. Security matters could be included.
- Consultations about the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly and its work.
- Consultations about the way in which Northern Ireland matters are handled in Parliament at Westminster.

If the various ideas I discussed with Mr. Molyneux and Dr. Paisley bore fruit, it would be necessary to consider what that meant for the work of the

Intergovernmental Conference.

4. I hope very much that unionists will think long and hard before embarking on a course of action involving strikes and stoppages. Such action can only damage ordinary people, particularly the elderly and the sick, and harm the economic life of Northern Ireland. A strike ostensibly carried out in the name of the Union is all too likely to lead to the erosion of support for the Union in the United Kingdom as a whole. The way to reinforce the Union is to engage in the comprehensive discussions with the Government that I have mentioned.

5. One thing should be clear. The Government will not be deflected from its determination to implement the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which has the support of the overwhelming majority of both Houses of Parliament representing all the people of the United Kingdom.

Thank you for coming to see  
me. Every good wish  
Yours sincerely  
Raymond Dalrymple

Ref. A086/687

PRIME MINISTER

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Northern Ireland

Following your meeting of Ministers after  
--- Cabinet today, I attach the draft of a letter  
from you to Archbishop Eames of the Church of  
Ireland.

2. I am sending copies of this minute and the  
draft letter to the Lord President, the Foreign  
and Commonwealth Secretary, the Home Secretary,  
the Secretary of State for Defence, the  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

MS

for

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

27 February 1986



To issue  
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DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO

Archbishop Eames  
Church of Ireland

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2. The Government realises that many unionists nevertheless dislike the Agreement and the Intergovernmental Conference which it established. I understand these feelings. But I do not think that they realise that it lies in the hands of the people in the Province, through their elected representatives, to reduce the range of the Intergovernmental Conference's work by entering into arrangements for a devolved administration in a form which is widely acceptable in the Province. Matters which were devolved to such a Northern Ireland administration would no longer be for discussion in the Intergovernmental Conference: the Agreement itself says that. When Mr Molyneaux and Dr Paisley visited me on 25 February, I readily agreed to consider their (separate from the Intergovernmental Conference) suggestion of a Round Table conference to discuss devolution, and ~~I am now~~ <sup>to</sup> exploring <sup>the</sup> ~~their~~ idea with the leaders of other Northern Ireland parties.

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- Consultations about the way in which Northern Ireland matters are handled in Parliament at Westminster.

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