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① Mr. East 16/3
② Mr. [unclear]

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16 MAR 1984

MUFAX ROOM
STORMONT HOUSE, ANNEY

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND MR ENOCH POWELL MP
IN NIO LONDON ON 15 MARCH 1984

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The Secretary of State had a meeting with Mr Powell in London on 15 March. The meeting was at the Secretary of State's suggestion, following up their earlier one of 29 February. The meeting discussed official contacts with political parties; unionist allegations of official involvement in terrorist activities; and political developments. Mr Needham MP and Mr Lyon were present.

Official Contacts with Political Parties

2. The Secretary of State noted the recent correspondence he had had with Mr Powell and Mr Molyneaux which culminated in Mr Powell's letter of 14 March about meetings between NIO officials and unionist politicians. The Secretary of State said that he believed that in the situation of Northern Ireland such official contacts were entirely legitimate. They were not publicised for security reasons, but were in no sense secret. They were arranged with people of all political persuasions in Northern Ireland. Mr Powell and Mr Molyneaux had objected particularly to a recent meeting with Mr William Brown. He had no reason to believe that Mr Brown himself objected to such a meeting. Indeed, he had that day telephoned the same official to ask for a further meeting to discuss another march which the UDA proposed to hold in Ballynahinch. The Secretary of State said that these meetings were certainly not intended to undermine political parties in Northern Ireland. It would be naive to imagine that they could do so, and such an attempt would almost certainly be counter-productive. He did not therefore believe that the complaints were justified.

3. Mr Powell said that there was a long-standing difference of view between himself and the Secretary of State on this issue. While he recognised that the situation was different in Great Britain, such meetings there would be inexcusable. With such meetings continuing in a climate of political sensitivity, it was understandable that political leaders should feel undermined. He too had views on marches in Ballynahinch, but no one had consulted him. It would go

CONFIDENTIAL

E.R.

some way to helping the situation if when such meetings were arranged, the leader of the relevant political party were informed in advance as well as the appropriate MP for the area if the discussion was on a constituency matter.

4. The Secretary of State said that he would make arrangements for Mr Powell to impart his views on the Ballynahinch marches. He had some sympathy with Mr Powell's suggestions for informing the political leader and, where relevant, the MP, and would consider further if and how this might be achieved. He would let Mr Powell know the outcome.

Unionist Allegations of Official Complicity

5. The Secretary of State said that he thought the allegations which unionist politicians, in particular the Reverend Martin Smyth, had made about official complicity in the murder of Assistant Governor McConnell were disgraceful. He had no evidence or knowledge of any covert activity by the security services in Northern Ireland which was in any way consistent with these allegations. They were wild and farfetched and deserved an apology. The security services would not indulge in activities with such clear political implications without directions from himself or the Prime Minister, which he was satisfied had not been given. Private discussions among Ministers of course considered a range of options, but there was no basis for suspecting a conspiracy: the Government had no intention of taking any action without full knowledge and discussion in Parliament and with the people of Northern Ireland.

6. Mr Powell said that the recent statements had to be put in their historical context. He had learned from a reliable security service source that Sir Maurice Oldfield had had a difference of view with Mr Edward Heath in 1972 over the employment of MI6 in Northern Ireland. He had reported to Mr Merlyn Rees that officials were encouraging and promoting a demand for independence in Northern Ireland; and Mr Rees had subsequently told him that these were FCO officials. The terms of the letter from Mr McConnell which had been published after his death were not fully clear, but the only reasonable interpretation was that he feared not the IRA but others who wanted

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

E.R.

to prevent him from saying what he knew about the circumstances which contributed to the Maze escape. It was significant that the allegations had first been made by Dr Paisley since he was the most likely ally of those who wished to see the British Government negotiate an autonomous Ulster within the Republic and therefore had knowledge and experience of MI6. The Secretary of State should appreciate that these perceptions were in the backs of the minds of politicians when they considered the meaning of the McConnell letter.

7. The Secretary of State said that he believed these conclusions were far fetched and had no basis in reality. He still believed it was wrong that they should have been publicly voiced.

Political Developments

8. The Secretary of State said that he saw no prospect of change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland in the foreseeable future, and held firmly to the view that no such change could any way come about without the consent of the people of Northern Ireland. Within the present constitution, however, he had four main objectives. First to improve relations with the Republic; second to recognise that Northern Ireland and the Republic shared jointly the problem of security; third that a large minority in Northern Ireland were concerned with their Irishness while they recognised that Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom would remain as presently constituted; and fourthly that a large number of unionists wished for some degree of self-government. He was concerned about the dependence of Northern Ireland on public expenditure, which could not go on increasing; the difficulties of attracting inward investment because of the difficult security situation; the vulnerability of the young unemployed to extremist doctrines; and the problem of defeating terrorism despite the considerable efforts of the security forces. All these factors led the Government to consider that it was essential to make some political progress in the areas he had identified

9. Mr Powell said that he did not believe the Government's four objectives were compatible with their overall acceptance of the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. Relations with the

CONFIDENTIAL

E.R.

CONFIDENTIAL

Republic could not be improved without in some way accepting the Irish claim over the territory of Northern Ireland, and thus compromising the unionist position. The root cause of terrorism was that it had a base and a background in the Republic. The Republic could not convincingly condemn violence while the IRA shared the same constitutional aspirations as the Republic. He did not believe that there should be any special recognition of the minority in Northern Ireland. He recognised their Irishness, and as a constituency MP had always done so and treated them fairly; but he did not believe it would be possible to devise any institutional arrangement which recognised their Irishness without compromising the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. Irish aspirations were incompatible with unionism.

10. Mr Powell accepted that some unionists wanted self-government. He had always seen this as incompatible with the union, but he now understood why. It was because unionists saw Stormont as the main obstacle in the path to a united Ireland which prevented the British Government's repeated attempts to achieve this end. But he himself believed the Assembly to be a menace. The Government wanted the UUP to return to it so that it could be used as the Northern Ireland leg of an Anglo-Irish constitutional settlement. This was widely believed to be the Government's objective following the Forum Report. But without the UUP in the Assembly, the Government was thwarted, and Dr Paisley was helpless.

11. Mr Powell said he did not consider that the answer lay in turning the Assembly into an upper-tier of local government. It would be too much like the old Stormont to be acceptable; and would raise only less acutely than a legislative body the problem of majority rule and power-sharing. The sharing of power at this level was unacceptable to those who would use it, as they would have used the power-sharing executive, to make the union unworkable. His own preference would be to give people more control over the affairs of their own areas: co-operation between communities at district council level had been shown to be practicable. The impasse at the top tier was in his view irresolvable. Nationalists were only interested in changes at the top tier because they saw this as a step on the way to an Irish-directed institution. Unless the

CONFIDENTIAL

Republic recognised the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and were prepared to repeal Articles 2 and 3 of their constitution, the unionist perception would remain. If the Irish were prepared to make these steps, the position would be changed.

12. Mr Powell said that he believed terrorism would continue as long as there was any prospect of the constitutional position of Northern Ireland being changed. The Government's attempts to improve relations with the Republic, and to increase security co-operation was no more than an encouragement to the IRA that their campaign was succeeding and should be continued. So too would be a devolved administration with power-sharing. There was no realistic prospect of the two communities coming together in Northern Ireland in a joint administration. The IRA would not allow it. The only hope of a reasonably secure future for the minority lay in them coming to tolerate a UK administration.

13. The Secretary of State said that he could not accept Mr Powell's analysis. He did not believe that unionists had addressed themselves sufficiently to the realities of the situation in Northern Ireland. There was a deep yearning for peace among many people in Northern Ireland. Terrorism would continue unless political progress could be made. The imposition of a UK administration without any prospects for change would not be tolerated by the minority and rather than stemming terrorism would increase it. Nor, despite what he thought Mr Molyneux believed, was there any reasonable expectation that the minority would find acceptable the development of local authority powers, either at the top tier, or at district council level. It was essential to find common ground between the communities and to isolate the terrorists. He had raised with the Irish Government the desirability of amending Articles 2 and 3 of the constitution. If this were possible, then he considered there might be some basis for making progress. But unless unionists were prepared to meet the minority halfway, he believed terrorism would continue, the economy would go on declining, and he feared for the prosperity and social life of the Province.

14. Concluding his contribution, Mr Powell said that there was a fundamental difference of perception between him and the Secretary of

CONFIDENTIAL

E.R.

State about the situation in Northern Ireland and the nature of the IRA. He would be interested to know from the Secretary of State what ways he could propose which recognised the minority's Irish identity without at the same time putting in jeopardy the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. He had welcomed the opportunity for an exchange of views.

15. The Secretary of State, concluding the discussion, said that if it were possible for them to find some common ground, they should do so for the good of Northern Ireland. He would be glad, therefore, to arrange for a further meeting with Mr Powell in due course.

J. M. Lyon

J M LYON
Private Secretary

16 March 1984

cc:-PS/Secretary of State(L&B) - M
PS/PSU(L&B) - M
PS/Sir Ewart Bell - M
Mr Brennan
Mr Angel
Mr Merifield - M - for advice and
draft letter on official meetings
please
Mr Abbott
Mr Boys Smith
Mr Reeve - M
Mr Bickham