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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

1. cc PUS (2)

Mr Brennan - for advice London SW1A 2AH

p/in light of SOJ's  
comments of today)

Mr Bloomfield

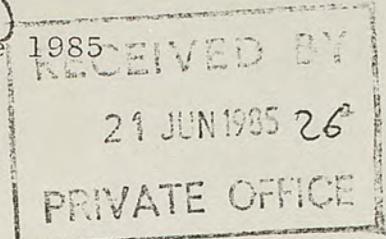
Mr Cell

Mr Chesterton

Dr Quigley ✓

Dear Charles, Mr Lyon.

2. SOJ's to see. NW 21/6.

Anglo-Irish Relations: Briefing the US Administration

With the Anglo-Irish talks attracting increasing public interest and press speculation, we have been giving thought to the need to take the US Administration a little more into our confidence about the way the talks are going and where they are heading. We know that the Irish have already briefed the Americans in general terms; and our Embassy in Washington believes that it is important to give the Americans some authoritative account of what is happening if we are to maximise their support for whatever emerges (or be sure of their understanding if the talks break down and no agreement is reached). We also need to explore with the Americans their ideas about a US contribution to the economic development fund for Northern Ireland which is alluded to in the draft agreement. This too is an area on which the Irish have already been sounding out opinion in Washington; and we want to make sure that the Americans take account of British as well as Irish views about the purposes of the fund and the way it might operate.

The Prime Minister will have seen that Sir Geoffrey Howe had a word about Ireland with George Shultz at Lisbon, but without going into specifics. Sir Geoffrey considers that the time has come to lift the veil a little further. As it happens, there will be an opportunity for this towards the end of next week, when David Goodall goes to Washington for the latest in a series of regular exchanges on international terrorism with Admiral John Poindexter, who is Bud MacFarlane's No 2 in the National Security Council. Poindexter also has an interest in Irish affairs, and the Embassy believes that, because of his position in the White House, he would be a good channel to use in order to put the Administration a little more in the picture on the Anglo-Irish talks. This would then clear the way for some exploratory discussion of the fund.

It would not be the intention that David Goodall should go into detail about the content of our discussions with the Irish; but he would explain that confidential talks have been taking place on the lines foreshadowed at the Prime Minister's meeting

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with the Taoiseach at Chequers last November; that the purpose has been to explore the possibility of some form of inter-governmental agreement which would provide reassurances for both the majority and minority communities in Northern Ireland; and that, in return for formal endorsement by the Republic of Northern Ireland's present status as part of the United Kingdom, it is envisaged that the Irish Government would be able, on an institutionalised basis, to put forward views and proposals to the British Government on certain aspects of Northern Ireland's affairs which directly affect the minority community. The agreement would also provide for much closer and more systematic cross-border security cooperation, and for joint consideration of measures to strengthen the confidence of the minority in the institutions of law and order in Northern Ireland (without at the same time undermining the confidence of the majority). Goodall would explain that the talks have made fairly steady progress and that, although there are important and difficult issues still to be resolved, both sides are taking them very seriously and there is now a real prospect that agreement might be reached within the next few months. If an agreement is not achieved, it will not be because of any lack of seriousness of purpose on the part of the British Government: on the contrary, we believe that we are going to the limit of what is possible in terms of giving the South a role in the province without prejudicing Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom to which the majority of the population remains passionately attached.

Goodall would go on to explain that if, as we hope, an agreement is achieved, it will be of great importance that it should have the full backing of constitutional Irish nationalists both in Northern Ireland itself and elsewhere: indeed it is the intention of both the British and the Irish Governments that it should open the way for the SDLP to resume participation in the political process and thus create the conditions for devolved government in the Province on a basis acceptable to both communities. The reaction of the United States Government, and of political opinion in the United States generally, could have a critical impact on the attitude of Irish nationalists everywhere. Both we and the Irish Government, therefore, very much hope that the United States will be able to give the agreement their full backing; and we welcome the indications which we have received that the United States Government might be willing to confirm its support by contributing to the efforts which the British and Irish Governments will be making jointly to promote economic and social development in those areas of Ireland which have suffered the consequences of violence and instability.

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At official level I understand that both the Northern Ireland Office and the Cabinet Office agree that it would be useful if David Goodall could be authorised to speak in broadly these terms in Washington. But Sir Geoffrey Howe would be grateful for confirmation that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland see no objection.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Jim Daniel in the Northern Ireland Office and to Richard Hatfield in Sir Robert Armstrong's office.

*Yours ever,*

*Len Appleyard*

(L V Appleyard)  
Private Secretary

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