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CONFIDENTIAL

WRRS/548/2

The Prime Minister met the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic last evening in the House of Commons. At Mr. Lynch's request, the initial part of the meeting was a private one between the two Prime Ministers. It was agreed that this part of the meeting should be off the record. I understand that Mr. Lynch's main purpose in requesting this private discussion was to enable him to explain to the Prime Minister the internal political pressures which he faced in the Irish Republic on relations with Northern Ireland. For the latter part of the meeting the Irish Ambassador and I were present.

The Prime Minister of the Irish Republic explained to the Prime Minister his concern about the recent events in Northern Ireland and said that, in the view of his Government, the problems arose basically out of partition. He referred also to local Government franchise, the arrangements for local elections and discrimination in Local Authority administration.

The Prime Minister replied by saying that he recognised that the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic faced his own internal pressures and that it was understandable that Mr. Lynch should feel concerned about events in Northern Ireland in particular about the Catholic element there. He emphasised, however, to Mr. Lynch that the internal

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affairs of Northern Ireland were a matter which fell within the jurisdiction of the Northern Irish Parliament. There was certainly concern at Westminster about the recent events. These were matters for discussion between him and the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland who would, as had been announced, be coming to see him next week.

The Prime Minister emphasised to Mr. Lynch that Captain O'Neill had demonstrated that he wanted to see reform and liberalisation in Northern Ireland. If the temperature of relations between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland were, however, raised by public statements, Captain O'Neill's position would be made more difficult in Northern Ireland. This could only delay, rather than advance, the process of reform and it could indeed undermine Captain O'Neill's position and authority. The Prime Minister pointed out that any successor would be almost certainly less liberal in outlook and intentions.

On the question of partition, the Prime Minister said that this was a matter for Irish people on both sides of the border. He referred the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic to the pledge he made in the House of Commons in May 1965. He said that he had repeated this pledge that afternoon in the House.

There was some discussion about the announced decision to appoint a Commission on the Constitution. The Prime Minister explained what the Government had in mind. The Prime Minister of the Irish Republic asked whether the effect of appointing the Commission would be to prevent any changes in Northern Ireland until the Commission had reported. In reply the Prime Minister explained that the terms of reference which were proposed would not prevent action on matters which fell within or close to the terms of reference of the Commission. The Commission would be

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required to take account of any such decisions that might be made. He was not, of course, prejudging what might emerge from his discussion with the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

At the end of the meeting there was discussion on what should be said to the Press when the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic was meeting later last evening. It was agreed that the Press might be told that the two Prime Ministers had a full exchange of views on relations between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. They had discussed economic relations and in particular how the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement had been operating, and the Common Market question. On Northern Ireland the Press would be told that the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic had explained his Government's views on recent events in Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister had explained that the internal affairs of Northern Ireland were matters for discussion between him and the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister of Northern Ireland said that he might wish to say that he had expressed the view that the situation in Northern Ireland was the result basically of partition. The Prime Minister said that he would then want to indicate that he had replied by re-affirming the pledge he gave in May 1965.

As you will see from today's Press, the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic went well beyond what was agreed and, indeed, has misrepresented what the Prime Minister in fact said to him on the question of partition.

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I am sending a copy of this letter to Barrington  
(Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

(sgd) D. H. Andrews

Geoffrey de Deney, Esq.,  
Home Office.