

JEP



cc- H. Woodfield
H. Gow

CABINET OFFICE

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CABINET OFFICE

A From the Secretary of the Cabinet: Sir Robert Armstrong KCB CVO

Ref: **22 DEC 1982** A0822605

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FILE INSTRUCTIONS

FILE NO. *Dear Mr Powell*

21 December 1982

Thank you for your letter of 9 December.

I am not sure that we may not already have reached the point when a stern editor might say that "this correspondence must now cease". But I should not like it to come to an end without thanking you, in my turn, for your courtesy to me, in your letters as well as at our meeting.

Without wishing to enter into extended correspondence on matters which you would expect to discuss with Ministers rather than with me, perhaps I could permit myself two brief comments on the substance of your letter.

Looking back at the communiques of the Prime Minister's meetings with Mr Haughey in May and December 1980 and with Dr FitzGerald in November 1981, I do not see how they can be taken as creating or implying agreements which limit the freedom of action of Her Majesty's Government with regard to constitutional arrangements in Northern Ireland. Both Mr Haughey and Dr FitzGerald are recorded as reaffirming the wish of the Irish Government to secure the unity of Ireland by agreement and in peace; but both are also expressly recorded, in an agreed joint communique, as agreeing with the Prime Minister that any change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland could come about only with the consent of the majority of the people in Northern Ireland.

As to the point about an Anglo-Irish "parliamentary tier" being up to the two Parliaments to decide about, recent events seem to throw some doubt on your statement that "the decision of Parliament would not be a decision contrary to the wish of the Government". In a matter such as the setting up of an inter-parliamentary body, it seems to me that the statement that it is for Parliament to decide is true in a more than merely formal sense; and that, even if such a decision would more often than not be taken on a motion proposed by the Government of the day, no Government would be likely to propose such a motion if it had reason to believe that the motion was unlikely to command a majority in the House of Commons.

With best wishes to you for Christmas, and for the New Year.

Yours sincerely

Robert Armstrong

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Mr Gow



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

Thank you for your letter of 16 December in which you drew my attention to press reports about a possible meeting between myself and the new Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland.

As I said in my written answer to Harvey Proctor on 30 November there are no plans for such a meeting at present. Our future relations with the Republic will inevitably depend on the attitude of the new government. But there can be no foundation for the suggestion that a meeting between myself and the Taoiseach would affect the commitments which the government has given about the constitutional status of the Province. It is part of the United Kingdom. These commitments remain the basis of our consideration of all aspects of Northern Ireland policy and they remain entirely firm. The position will not be compromised in any meetings I may have with Dr. FitzGerald.

The Rt. Hon. Enoch Powell, M.B.E., M.P.