

SECRET

Prime Minister

NORTHERN IRELAND

1. Enoch Powell came to see me this morning, at his request.
2. Jim Molyneux, who had a meeting with Jim Prior at Hillsborough last evening, is remaining in the Province today.
3. Enoch will be in his place at Question Time.
4. He has in mind to ask you a question along the following lines:-

|| "Will the Prime Minister interpose her personal authority and commitment to the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland upon the dwindling moral^a of the people of Northern Ireland?" ||

5. As you know, I believe that it would be helpful for you, as Leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party, to repeat your commitment and that of the Government to the union. I recognise that a restatement of that commitment would be unwelcome to the Foreign Office and to Jim Prior. It is my impression that if I was to indicate to Enoch that you would consider such a question to be unhelpful, then he would defer asking it today, but that it could not be long deferred.
6. When you saw Enoch on 17th November, he was very greatly struck when you said to him:-

"You mean that I should say that I am a Unionist?"

He replied:-

"Yes, that shows a true perception of the reality in Northern Ireland."
7. Unfortunately, Enoch has interpreted your words as having given a commitment to say, publicly, that you are a Unionist, in one form or another, whereas that was certainly not my interpretation of the meaning of the exchange to which I have referred. My interpretation of the words which were used by you is that you simply wanted to establish what it was that Enoch was saying to you. Nevertheless, I repeat, that I think that you ought to respond to Enoch's question, whether asked today or next week, in a way that would re-assure not only the Protestant majority but also that estimated 40% of the Roman Catholic minority which wants the Province to remain part of the United Kingdom.

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8. When Enoch and Jim Molyneux came to see me yesterday, they stressed, over and over again, the growing belief among ordinary decent people living in the Province that HMG was engaged in a sell out. We both know that that is not true. However, the key point is that ordinary decent people, (egged on, of course, by Paisely) believe that it is true.
9. In accordance with your instructions, I telephoned Jim Prior in Belfast on Tuesday afternoon and expressed your concern for his wellbeing, following the events at Robert Bradford's funeral. I told him that Enoch had been to see you that morning and reported Enoch's interpretation of the words, "two major traditions" in paragraph four of the Communique, dated 6th November. I also reported that it was Enoch's view that the new crisis in the Province was the direct consequence of the Communique. I did not tell him about what Enoch regards as the most important part of his discussion with you, to which I refer in paragraph seven above.
10. You will remember that when Enoch came to see you in your room at the House some months ago, he put a number of points to you, prefaced by the words: "Would you be surprised to know".
11. You will remember, too, that these points were based on information which had been supplied to Enoch by a senior official in the Northern Ireland Office. That same official has told Enoch that officials in the Northern Ireland Office and in the Foreign Office have been discussing with officials of the Republic Government a plan whereby if the Province was incorporated into the Republic, HMG would claim as justification for such a move, the prospective membership of the enlarged Irish Republic of Nato. This would then be hailed as a major diplomatic and military success by HMG.
12. Enoch said that he would not be surprised if these discussions between officials of the British and Republic Governments were unknown to Ministers in Her Majesty's Government although they would certainly be known to Ministers in the Republic Government. If such discussions have taken place, there is an obvious danger that they could be leaked.
13. I am working on a form of words which you might use in answer to Enoch's question which, if it does not come today, will surely come later on.
14. This note is marked Secret and has been shown to no-one else.

19th November 1981

IAN GOW