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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

*cc Blighan
S Gow*



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Rennie Rennie

Hand 23/11

23 November 1979

Michael Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear Michael,

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Thank you for sending me a copy of Mr Enoch Powell's draft speech due to be delivered this evening.

It is evident from the text that he is not in fact asserting that the Government has reached some sort of secret deal with the Government of the Republic: he is merely raising the spectre of it. It can be no coincidence that the speech is being circulated in advance of the OUP's Executive Committee meeting this evening. The speech therefore falls into place as a rationalisation of the OUP's (in practice, Mr Powell's) decision not to attend the Conference, and is in part perhaps an attempt to alarm the DUP by conjuring up an illusory threat to the Union. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth.

We cannot stop Mr Powell delivering the speech (which will in any case already be in the hands of the press), and in his present state of mind it would be folly to try: something worse would result. Taking account of Mr Powell's fury at the calling of a conference, and the fact that he is not in terms accusing the Prime Minister of making a "secret deal" with the Republic, Mr Atkins suggests that there is little point in putting Mr Gow up to tackle Mr Powell. For reasons which we cannot fully understand, Mr Powell is at present looking hard for conspiracies and hints of deception, and such an approach could go wrong. As evidence of this, the speech refers to the Boundary Commission's report having been deferred at the Prime Minister's instigation. You will know that that is untrue: the Commission simply took longer than expected to reach agreement. Their ~~report is~~ ^{reports are} ready, and will be published on 8 January (but that must not be announced - the date is a matter for the Commission).

The line we propose to use in response to questions about the speech is quite simply that there is no truth whatsoever in Mr Powell's suggestion of a secret deal with the Government of the Republic, and the sequence of events over the last month or two requires no such assumption to be made. On the penultimate

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paragraph of his "open letter", when Mr Powell says that terrorism in Ulster cannot be bought off by constitutional changes, we shall make it clear that my Secretary of State entirely agrees, and has said so repeatedly - most recently at the end of his statement announcing publication of the White Paper, and during Questions yesterday.

As we agreed on the telephone, I leave it to you to pass this on to the Paymaster General's office.

Yours ever,

R. A. Harrington

R A HARRINGTON

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