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15 May, 1980

The Rt. Hon. Humphrey Atkins M.P.  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland  
Stormont Castle  
Belfast.

Dear Humphrey

Thank you for your letter of 21 April in response to which I would like to say how much I too appreciated meeting you here. Our talks did indeed help to clarify our respective positions and I look forward to their continuance.

I appreciate your raising informally the view which I expressed at our meeting that my Government should be involved in discussions of a devolved administration in Northern Ireland. In this regard I must say that, as you know, our involvement is not particularly or solely related to the process of negotiation which you are at present engaged in with the representatives of certain parties in Northern Ireland, or even to the more general question of relations between both parts of the community there. It flows from history and the realities today and relates also to the need for structured discussion between our Governments about relations between both parts of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. These are the dimensions in which we see the talks with your Government and in which we would hope to find a formula for permanent peace and stability, for the benefit of all the people of these islands.

As regards the process in which you are engaged, you are aware that it is not our policy to comment publicly upon developments.

You refer to the risk of extinction of the partial cooperation of the Unionist side from which your efforts have benefitted up to now. In any case, however, there is a much more obvious danger of withdrawal by the parties which desire implementation of what we understood to be the bipartisan British objective of executive partnership. You are aware of our conviction, in these circumstances, of the absence of any prospect for lasting success of the negotiation you are engaged in and of our view that, even if it were to lead to an agreed result, this will

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not provide a conclusive settlement. It is for this reason that we propose that the issue be lifted to a higher plane between us and that we should discuss in a fundamental way, all three dimensions of the problem.

I look forward to seeing you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

DRIAN LENIHAN

*Please convey text to Mr. Athlins. Signed text follows in tonight's bag.*

As regards the process in which you are engaged, you are aware that it is our policy to support broadly open developments.

You refer to the risk of interruption of the normal operation of the financial and other services which are essential to the well-being of the island. It is our policy to support broadly open developments of that kind and we are confident that the Government of the island will be able to meet the challenge of such a situation. The Government of the island, in their arrangements, of the nature of any proposal for limiting the scope of the arrangements you are engaged in and of our view that, even if it were to be necessary to suspend recall, this will