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Ali DA
adi Krakak

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

23 April 1986

Dear Jim,

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister had a talk with the Northern Ireland Secretary this evening about the situation in the Province.

The Northern Ireland Secretary said that Mr. Molyneux and Dr. Paisley were likely to reply to the Prime Minister's latest letter shortly (they have of course since done so). Assuming their reply was reasonably positive, his intention was to propose discussions in the first place at senior official level leading on to his own involvement. He did not think that either Mr. Molyneux or Dr. Paisley would want to hold further discussions with the Prime Minister until they had a clear idea of the possible outcome.

The Northern Ireland Secretary said that the security situation in the Province remained very difficult. There was a threat of major trouble in Portadown on 5 May if a planned march went ahead. His assessment was that the RUC were holding up well to the strain.

If talks with the Unionist leaders could be started, this might lead to some diminution in the violence. The Northern Ireland Secretary referred to the unsatisfactory part being played in Northern Ireland affairs at present by Mr. John Hume. He seemed to spend scarcely any time in the Province and was not making any helpful contribution to relations between the communities.

The Northern Ireland Secretary noted that the Irish Government were at pains to avoid any unhelpful comment on or intervention in the affairs of the North. A decision would be needed shortly on when to hold the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference. There was something to be

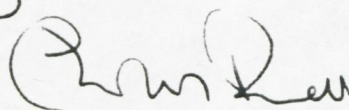
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said for an early meeting followed by a longish interval to allow talks with Northern Ireland party leaders to take place. At present the Irish Government were insisting that the next meeting should be in Belfast. His own firm view was that this would only inflame an already very difficult situation and could jeopardise the planned talks with Unionist Party leaders. The Prime Minister agreed.

Yours sincerely


(Charles Powell)

Jim Daniell, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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