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SRWAKY

10 DOWNING STREET

ce RTA.

From the Private Secretary

21 November 1985

Dear Jim,

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Prime Minister held an informal meeting of Ministers following Cabinet this morning to discuss ways in which more reassurance could be offered to the Unionists following the recent Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Lord President, the Foreign Secretary, the Northern Ireland Secretary, the Lord Privy Seal, the Home Secretary and the Chief Whip were present.

The Prime Minister said that the Unionists had fastened on to the lack of consultation with them in the negotiations of the Agreement with the Irish Republic as a major grievance. They were also making a point of the fact that, while the Nationalists would have the Republic Government to put forward their concerns in the intergovernmental committee, the Unionists would have no channel for their views. Ministers concerned should give very early consideration to ways to deal with these perceived grievances. In particular, the Government should set out clearly the steps for consulting the Unionists which were already available through the Northern Ireland Assembly. Consideration should be given as to how this consultation could be reinforced and also to arrangements at Westminster which would provide the focus for Unionists to put forward their views.

More immediately it was essential to send a very early reply to the letter from Mr. James Kilfedder, M.P., in which he had conveyed a Resolution of the Assembly inviting the Prime Minister to address them. The reply should express the Prime Minister's willingness to see the Speaker of the Assembly and a representative delegation of members at Downing Street at an early date. This reply should issue early on 22 November so that it could be made public before the planned Unionist demonstration on 23 November.

Consideration was also needed as to how the SDLP could be encouraged to return to the Assembly. It was agreed that an early message from the Prime Minister to the Taoiseach asking his help in persuading the SDLP to take some positive steps was desirable.

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I should be grateful for a draft reply to Mr. Kilfedder by 2030 hours this evening.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to those present at the meeting.

Yours sincerely
Charles Powell

(C.D. POWELL)

Jim Daniell, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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