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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

*Fine Linster*

*CDP  
25/11/85*

25 November 1985

Charles Powell Esq  
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LONDON SW1

*Dear Chas*

Mr John Hume MP called to see the Secretary of State in London on 21 November at Mr King's request.

The Secretary of State began by saying that the recent Anglo-Irish Agreement represented a major achievement for the SDLP but had been badly received by the Unionists. It was necessary to seek to reassure moderate Unionist opinion. He intended to meet the criticism that the Agreement was one-sided by pointing to the other means available to Unionists to express their views to the Government; but a gesture was needed from the SDLP. He hoped that Mr Hume would be prepared in next week's Parliamentary debate to encourage nationalists in the North to support the security forces (on the lines of remarks already made by Mr Peter Barry), and to be forthcoming about SDLP participation in the internal government of the Province by indicating a readiness to engage in discussion on devolution and possibly by joining the Assembly. Other specific steps might include the nomination of SDLP members to the Police Authority.

Mr Hume replied that he was receptive to these suggestions but could not commit political suicide. He had to represent the nationalist point of view. He would indicate support for the security forces, as he had in the past, provided that they operated in accordance with the law. He would be prepared to put forward names for the Police Authority, but if this were publicised the lives of the individuals would be at risk. There was no way in which the SDLP could join the present Assembly in advance of another election; but he was ready to talk to the Unionists about devolution provided that it was on the basis of power-sharing. He believed that if the Government faced down the Unionists they would be prepared within 6 months to talk about power-sharing. Mr Hume added that he welcomed the Unionist intention to seek by-elections and believed that the SDLP could achieve some success against both the Unionists and Sinn Fein. In particular he believed that they would win the Newry-Armagh seat.

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The Secretary of State said that it was not enough simply to repeat previous SDLP positions. The Agreement had created a new situation which called for new initiatives. There was a great prize to be gained, but it was necessary to win the support of moderate Unionists and for this a gesture from the SDLP was needed. After further discussion Mr Hume agreed that in his speech on Tuesday he would encourage support for the security forces and urge his supporters to take positive steps (eg by providing information in confidence) to prevent fellow citizens being murdered or to bring the murderers to justice. He would also indicate his willingness to take part in discussion on devolution, avoiding reference to power-sharing and using instead some formulation such as all parties contributing to the government of the Province. He offered to let the Secretary of State see the speech in draft. Mr Hume added that he was willing to do anything else in his power to help sell the Agreement. He would be prepared to talk to Unionist leaders about it and even to address a public meeting on the Shankill Road.

In view of Mr Hume's positive response to his suggestions the Secretary of State judges that it is unnecessary (and might well be counter-productive) for the Prime Minister to seek the Taoiseach's assistance in putting pressure on the SDLP leader.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President of the Council, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Lord Privy Seal, the Home Secretary, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*You smaly*  
*John Daniell*

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