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PS/Secretary of State

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c.c. PS/PUS (I&B)-M
PS/Lord Gowrie (I&B)-M
Mr. W.E. Bell
Mr. Marshall (L)-M
Mr. Angel (L)-M
Mr. Doyne-Ditmas
Mr. Chesterton (L)-M
Mr. Gilliland
Mr. Blatherwick o.r.
Mr. Leach

SDLP

I spent a couple of hours with Mr. Hume in Londonderry yesterday, an appointment arranged before the SDLP asked for a meeting today with the Secretary of State. But the Secretary of State may wish to have a preview of some of the things Mr. Hume is likely to be saying.

2. In a wide ranging discussion I was left with two general impressions. Mr. Hume has got over his gloom about the erosion, during the hunger strike, of support for the SDLP and is now very dismissive of the challenge of more extreme, PSF-oriented, Republican groupings. From the views which I have heard from other well-informed sources with contacts in the minority community, I think Mr. Hume underestimates the danger to the SDLP of being beaten in the game of grass-roots politics. Or perhaps he does not think it politic to admit that he has cause for concern.

3. Secondly, Mr. Hume is obviously worried by any signs of the Nationalist tradition coming to terms with the Unionist tradition other than through the instrument of the SDLP, i.e. he does not like Dr. FitzGerald's talk of amending the Constitution nor Dr. FitzGerald receiving groups of Northern Unionist professional men. This is natural enough; as a Party leader Mr. Hume's message to the forces of Nationalism in the Republic is bound to be "if you want to do a deal with the Unionist you must do it through us".

4. Mr. Hume said that his delegation this afternoon would be making 5 points:

- (i) The British Government's approach to the Northern Ireland problem should be placed exclusively within the context

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of the Anglo-Irish dialogue;

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- (ii) The SDLP would go along with a majority rule Parliament for Northern Ireland provided that,
- (iii) the powers exercised by that Parliament were exercised from Dublin not London, and of course the North would send members to the Dublin Parliament where they would no doubt hold a balance of power;
- (iv) A strong Anglo-Irish council would provide the GB dimension.
- (v) Citizenship would be "open" (sic).

5. I and Mr. Gilliland, who had joined us for lunch, pointed out that this was all going much too fast and too far, since there was not the slightest prospect of the Unionists in the North agreeing to put themselves under Dublin tutelage. Mr. Hume said that he could see no interim step. In answer to a question he said that the above was what the delegation would be saying privately to the Secretary of State. It represented the overwhelming view of the Party which had voted 27 to 3 in its favour at a recent Donegal meeting. They were not proposing to say publicly that any of this had been floated at today's meeting.



D.J. WYATT
22 October 1981
(MR/14h)

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