

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



CONFIDENTIAL

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

CONFIDENTIAL

EDP

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

21 November 1985

Dear Charles

MEETING WITH JOHN CUSHNAHAN

I attach a short briefing note for the Prime Minister's meeting with John Cushnahan at 10.00am tomorrow. The Secretary of State will attend.

*Yours sincerely
Jim Daniell*

J A DANIELL

*into PM's
box*

21/11

CONFIDENTIAL

E.R.

MEETING WITH JOHN CUSHNAHAN - LEADER OF THE ALLIANCE PARTY OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Mr Cushnahan has adopted a responsible public attitude, urging people to study the document carefully before jumping to conclusions. In private, however, he is deeply concerned not least because the Agreement has split his party. A number of his colleagues are still angry at the secrecy which surrounded the negotiations and the lack of prior consultation; they are worried that the Irish Government has been given more than just a consultative role; and they fear that the Agreement will reduce the prospects for devolution and threaten the continued existence of the Assembly. Alliance have invested considerable time and energy in the Assembly and several senior party members now rely entirely on Assembly pay for their livelihoods.

2. Mr Cushnahan has always argued for an internal political settlement which will allow both the majority and the minority to play a part. He relies for electoral support on moderate elements within both communities and knows that such support will be quickly undermined if the Agreement serves to further polarise political opinion. He now believes that Alliance will fall apart unless:-

- (a) The Irish Government's role is purely consultative;
- (b) The Agreement leads to a definite improvement in security;
- (c) A role is found for unionist politicians;
- (d) The SDLP show early interest in devolution and make some gesture towards supporting the security forces.

3. Mr Cushnahan will be looking for re-assurance on these points and an opportunity to explain his party's position. Without such re-assurance, it will be increasingly difficult for him to maintain his helpful public stance and to preserve the devolution option. The Prime Minister may wish to stress the importance which the Government continues to place on devolution and to emphasise the positive role which the Agreement can play in this respect. She may also want to explain that the Intergovernmental Conference will have no executive powers and will not derogate, therefore, from the sovereignty of HMG.