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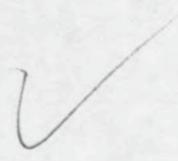


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16 October 1985

Dear Assistant Secretary

Some comments by John Houston, Political Adviser to Sir Geoffrey Howe

He has studied the draft Agreement in detail and thinks it is very good. However, the presentation of it will be one of the keys to its success or failure. He is following the preparation of the question and answer text and thinks it most useful.

He said the Mallaby group (to which I referred after my last talk with him), set up to propose to Ministers ways of selling the Agreement to the Unionists, has met once already but he was not able to attend. The problem of selling the deal has, he said, been compounded by the fact that T.E. Utley ("Pew") of the Telegraph, on whom they feel they must work to soften him, hates Tom King and is very likely to pursue him in the paper.

They have not yet, he said, a hard estimation made as to what exactly they are up against with the Unionists. However, a wave of reaction is beginning to crest now and we can expect to see much more in the near future. He referred to the Unionist diplomatic offensive (at present under way here) organised by the "appalling" David Burnside: all in all, he felt it to be no harm that the Unionists should use up some muscle power in such a way; at the very least, it might keep their minds off other things.

Yours sincerely

Richard Ryan
Counsellor.