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**Title:** Letter from HJ McCann, Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, to P McKernan in the Consulate General of Ireland, New York, USA, concerning John Hume's wish to see the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, enclosing a note giving an account of the preliminaries and of the substance of the interview.

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24th March, 1972

Confidential

Dear Hugh:

Further to my code telegram No. 111 of 20th March concerning John Hume's wish to see the Secretary-General, the appointment was fixed for 3:15p.m. on the following day (Tuesday, 21st). The attached note gives an account of the preliminaries and of the substance of the interview.

2. I hope I have accurately reflected what Mr. Hume said. He has, of course, not seen the Note and I don't know whether you would wish to show it to him.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh J. McCann, Esq.  
Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Dublin.

CCC:md  
encls.

cc. Mr. P. MacKernan,  
Consulate, New York.

24th March, 1972

ConfidentialMr. John Hume to Secretary-General

Mr. MacKernan telephoned me late on the night of 16/17 March to say that Mr. John Hume (with whom he had been on the Channel 13 programme that evening) had expressed a wish to be received by the Secretary-General. I later told Mr. MacKernan that I would try to arrange an appointment but that in my opinion it would be only prudent to advise Mr. Hume that we might not secure one. U Thant had a rule whereby he would automatically receive (on request) a member of a national Parliament, which applied for instance in the case of Miss Bernadette Devlin and Mr. Gerry Fitt. I presumed that Dr. Waldheim would follow the same rule but, of course, Stormont is not a national Parliament. Also, while I was fairly familiar with U Thant's general practice, I was not sure how the new Secretary-General intended to run his office.

2. About 11:45a.m. on 17th March I spoke to Mrs. Mira, who looks after the Secretary-General's appointments, and put the request to her. I indicated that Mr. Hume would be available on the following day (Saturday) and possibly on the Monday or Tuesday. Dr. Hennig telephoned me at about 3p.m. on Monday, 20th: he is a former member of the Austrian Mission who has been brought here as Special Assistant to the Secretary-General. He told me that the Secretary-General would be glad to receive me and that there was no reason why I should

not bring someone with me if I wished.

3. I ascertained from Mr. MacKernan that Mr. Hume was then in Washington but would be returning to New York the following morning and leaving for Dublin that evening. I then told Dr. Hennig that any time that afternoon would suit Mr. Hume. He said he was not sure if an appointment would be possible as the Secretary-General's schedule for the week was very heavy. He told us the following morning (Tuesday) that an appointment was fixed for 3:15p.m.

4. The interview with the Secretary-General lasted approximately 25 minutes. Mr. Hume gave him a succinct account of the history of Partition beginning with 1912 and the then "rebellion" of the Unionists. By and large his account was similar to what he had said on the Channel 13 programme on 16th March, the salient features being:

- (i) the persistently gross discrimination, in the matter of local government, housing and employment, against the minority, buttressed by the exploitation of religious differences, and designed to maintain, as it did, a permanent one-party Government;
- (ii) the persistence, obviously reflecting a deliberate policy of the Northern Administration, of very high unemployment in areas of Catholic concentration such as Derry, Strabane and Newry;
- (iii) the growing discontent of the minority which led to the civil rights movement in autumn 1968;
- (iv) while he, like the vast bulk of the people, deplores recourse to violence, there has in fact been violence in the North every ten years or so since the establishment of Partition, this reflecting the utter frustration of the minority in bringing about by constitutional means any kind of improvement;

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- (v) the introduction of British troops to maintain law and order in August 1969 and the deep disaffection of the minority vis-à-vis British troops because of their blatantly partisan attitude as from the summer of 1970;
- (vi) the escalation in violence since the introduction of internment in August 1971 as shown by a comparison of the death roll before and after that date, and as predicted by himself and others in their warnings to the British authorities;
- (vii) the decision of the Opposition and the minority leaders to withdraw from all cooperation with the Northern Administration after internment;
- (viii) the fact that British troops are in effect acting on the instructions of Belfast, and that their activities had been illegal until Westminster recently rushed through an act legitimising them not only for the future but retroactively;
- (ix) the gravity of Britain's mistake in trying to solve the problem by military means whereas it is only capable of solution by political means;
- (x) the danger that, if Britain insists on relying solely on military measures, the only result will be further escalation which could spill over into the South, thus creating a catastrophic situation.

5. In connection with (vi) above the Secretary-General remarked that he had noted the figures published that morning in the New York Times (cutting attached).

6. In connection with (viii) Mr. Hume explained the circumstances in which the British Parliament had passed the act, making the point that the three judges who sat on his appeal had been unanimous in holding that the British troops had no legal foundation for their activities.

7. As regards what action the British Government should take, Mr. Hume maintained that Westminster should take over direct responsibility for security in the North, withdraw the troops to barracks, put an end to internment without trial, and suspend or abolish Stormont. The Secretary-General enquired what would replace Stormont. Mr. Hume explained that, until a satisfactory solution has been worked out, authority should be vested in a Commission, comprising representatives of London, Dublin and the different elements in the North. It was pointed out to the Secretary-General that Stormont is a complete anomaly within the United Kingdom having no parallel in Scotland or Wales or in any of the English geographical units (like say Lancashire) <sup>with populations greater than the North and that indeed</sup> /strictly speaking it is in no sense a Parliament in the normal meaning of the term. Mr. Hume added that there was much talk of London putting forward certain proposals soon but that he feared they might not be sufficiently radical to meet the situation.

8. The Secretary-General said he was extremely interested in what Mr. Hume had told him and that he, personally, is quite concerned about the matter. Mr. Hume would, he went on, be aware of what he (the Secretary-General) tried to do, and in particular of his offer of good offices, but, he could not act without the agreement of both parties, and Britain, invoking Article 2.7 of the Charter, had not so far shown any inclination to have recourse to him. The offer, he added, remains open and if he is approached he will be very glad to act. He wondered whether Mr. Hume thought there was

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something he could do at this stage.

9. Mr. Hume replied that he was indeed aware of the limitations to which the Secretary-General is subject but that he would hope he might in his talks with the British make known his anxiety and recommend that, in place of their present policy of trying to uproot violence, which is only a symptom of the disease, they might tackle the disease itself by adopting policies calculated to achieve a basic solution. The Secretary-General commented that he, personally, agrees that only a political solution can be effective. He would, he said, be in London shortly and would then have an opportunity of talking about the matter to British Ministers. He also remarked that it is to <sup>him</sup>quite strange to find in the 20th century religious distinctions exploited in the way they are in the North.

10. At the conclusion of the interview I suggested to the Secretary-General that, if the press asked me about the purpose of my visit, I would reply to the effect that:

- (a) it has been my custom to keep the Secretary-General informed of the situation in the North from time to time as was indeed stated by an OPI spokesman on 7th September last;
- (b) ~~that~~ the visit was part of this sequence;
- (c) ~~that~~ as Mr. Hume, M.P. from Derry, was in New York I brought him with me on this occasion.

11. The Secretary-General wondered whether it was necessary to refer to Mr. Hume as "we have said nothing about it". I replied that I would only do so if pressed, that we would not wish to do or say anything that might embarrass the Secretary-General and that it was not my intention to make any statement unless questioned. The Secretary-General agreed that the formula suggested would be quite satisfactory.

C. CC  
24.10.72

CCC:md  
enc.