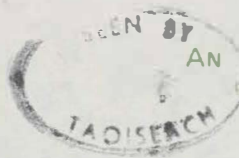




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AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

25

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2  
DUBLIN 2

SECRET

19 February, 1992.

Mr. Dermot Nally,  
Secretary to the Government,  
Government Buildings,  
Merrion Street,  
Dublin 2.

Dear Dermot,

*Taoiseach  
To see please -  
Particularly page 4.  
You may wish to have  
a brief meeting on, say, Friday to  
prepare for the SDLP meeting at 10AM on  
Monday. The ministers for Foreign Affairs  
and Justice could be asked to attend  
with advisers.*

Hume Contacts

*19/2/92*

I enclose a note which attempts to analyse as briefly as I can the most recent Sinn Fein draft (you already have the text) and to summarise the background to the process and some key points to be considered. I enclose also a short text which might be considered as a basis for a message to be conveyed via Mr. Hume. I can confirm the British side have the <sup>text</sup> and are aware the issue will arise at the forthcoming London meeting.

Yours sincerely,

*Seán O hUiginn*

Seán O hUiginn  
Assistant Secretary

*M. Keenan  
3/3  
W. L. Leahy  
4.3.92*

SECRET

Hume's efforts for an IRA cessation of violence

Background

Since 1988, Hume has been trying to persuade Sinn Fein/IRA that the British were now neutral on Irish unity since they had formally agreed Article One of the Agreement to give effect to a united Ireland if a majority in Northern Ireland consented to it. He argued that the armed struggle against the British was therefore misguided even in IRA terms, since the obstacle to unity was the Unionists rather than the British. He urged Sinn Fein therefore to take the political path and join with other nationalists in persuading Unionists to change. Adams and at least some other paramilitary leaders have been nibbling at these ideas, but it is unclear how far they are willing to move from their stated position, that they will cease violence only in return for British commitment to withdraw to a fixed timetable. Hume, through a clerical intermediary, has been trying to negotiate a "scenario" where the IRA would agree a cessation (not a temporary ceasefire) in return for a joint declaration by the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister. In this the British would express some general support for Irish unity by consent while the Taoiseach would agree to set up a "Convention" - possibly a kind of permanent Forum-style body - to advise on the steps necessary to realise unity.

Key Questions

1. Are the paramilitaries interested in genuine compromise? If so, it would be worth while for the sake of peace to help them off the hook in terms they can "sell" to their supporters. If however they are sticking to the condition of a fixed timetable for British withdrawal then the proposal offers no new advantage, since it no way diminishes the problems of such a move (possible loyalist violence,

disaffection of RUC, financial shortfall of £2 billion annually, etc).

2. If they are open to compromise, can it be achieved without major Unionist backlash? Anything which stresses British support for Irish unity probably needs to be balanced by assurance to the Unionists (including from Dublin) that they will not be forced into a united Ireland. Otherwise Unionists will see it as an IRA victory, even if with a "stay of execution" and react accordingly.
3. Can we be sure the "Convention" will not be used to revive the Provo agenda in the South, or to challenge our existing institutions. Would parties in the South cooperate? Probably, if the proposal delivers peace, but not if it merely promises to. Any half-way process would leave the Governments facing only blame for dealing with terrorists.
4. Since the Unionists are likely to refuse all talks on this basis, where does this leave the three-stranded approach? Can these two tracks be reconciled sometime in the future?

#### Newest Draft from Sinn Fein

The draft, while using some of Hume's language, remains nevertheless very close to the basic Sinn Fein position. It does not acknowledge any separate identity of the Unionists, much less Northern Ireland, mentioning the "present constitutional arrangements" only as factors which have inhibited "agreement and cooperation of the people, North and South" and which the Governments must therefore solemnly commit themselves to replace, implicitly by an independent all-Ireland constitution. The British Government is required to commit itself to unity within a period to be agreed, and the Irish Government's acknowledgement of the need for Unionist consent is put merely as a practical preference rather than a principle.

The Convention, coming after the British Government's commitment to "remove the constitutional barriers" seems more a matter of accommodating Unionists within a unity dictated from outside, rather than winning their prior agreement. In short, it assumes a degree of coercion of the Unionists which could be difficult and very risky for the island as a whole and which Mr. Major is unlikely to accept. Mr. Hume however stresses that this must be seen as an opening gambit by Sinn Fein.

Possible action

- (a) Further exploration to establish whether the paramilitaries are serious about getting off the hook: Hume might be invited to confirm that the Taoiseach is disposed to be helpful, but will not take the enormous political risks involved unless he is satisfied they are operating on a realistic basis (i.e. no coercion of Unionists). Points could be given to Hume about the unacceptable elements of the draft and issues of concern to us.
  
- (b) Discussion with the British Prime Minister to establish his view and explore the extent to which the two Governments might in any case adopt some similar approach (e.g. back to back declarations of British interest in unity, and of Irish respect for Unionist consent and freedom from coercion, coupled perhaps with arrangements going somewhat beyond the Anglo-Irish Agreement, as a basis for getting the paramilitaries to come off the hook or, failing that, to isolate them further.

Seán O hUiginn  
17 February, 1992

The Taoiseach has reflected carefully on the proposal, and would be willing, if he could be sure of peace, to shoulder the enormous political risks involved. However, since no good purpose could be served by misunderstandings, he would wish everyone to be clear on a number of points:

1. The change in public attitudes caused by revulsion at the IRA campaign is now so great as to seriously limit the freedom of manoeuvre of all political parties here on a proposal such as this. A positive collective response might be attainable in return for the certainty of a permanent cessation of violence, but not for a mere promise, or for half-way or ambiguous measures which would leave parties politically hostage to further atrocities.
2. There is no prospect of political parties in the South espousing the IRA agenda in return for a cessation, or joining in a collective political aggression against the Unionist community. Any process must be genuinely one of persuasion and must start from existing Irish realities, including the political reality of the Unionist community as they define their own position. Any British move which increases Unionist fears that they will be coerced into unity will call for corresponding assurances from the nationalist community, in terms the Unionist community can find credible, that the process of agreement, as defined in the Forum Report, is the basis for all negotiation on how the right to self-determination of the Irish people can be exercised collectively, and that pending such agreement, their rights will be fully respected.
3. The proposed Convention, and every other aspect of the process, must take place with full respect for the authority of the Constitution of Ireland and the institutions established by it.