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Meeting with John Hume

1. I had a meeting with Mr. Hume over the weekend to debrief him on his meeting with Mr. Major on Friday. Ancram and Chilcot had also been present (but not Mayhew).
2. Mr. Hume said he had urged Major to be less rigid on the issue of clarification. He had stressed to Major the particular nature of the IRA, and the problem caused by the tone of Major's presentation, particularly at Westminster. The one-sided emphasis on Unionist concerns had caused real problems for the Republicans.
3. Hume thought Major took this point on board but was nevertheless very strong in saying that he could not change his position. Hume suggested that they should reopen the channel of communication which had existed in the past. Major said that their experience of that channel had made them very wary of resorting to it again. Hume pointed out that the publicity about the channel had begun with a leak from official sources to the Rev. McCrea. He suggested however that clarification could also be given by way of letter.
4. I asked Hume in parenthesis what points he thought Adams wished clarified, saying that even after careful reading of various Sinn Fein statements that point was not altogether clear. Hume understands that Adams' request relates to three points:
 - (i) The nature of exploratory talks: the implication that the talks were about surrender of weapons after "decontamination" had caused difficulty for Adams. They wished to elucidate "the third point of the 5th

November message through the Channel", which Hume said they saw as being about demilitarisation.

(Note: This probably relates to paragraph 5 (iii) of that message, which states that exploratory dialogue would, among other things, be "to examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence").

(ii) The second point of clarification related to what exactly self-determination meant.

(iii) The third point sought clarification of the Unionist veto.

5. Hume said he had suggested to Major that the Prime Minister could clarify the issue of self-determination in a letter or speech by saying that they acknowledged that the people living in Ireland have a right to self-determination, but because of historical factors which everyone wanted to leave behind, the people of Ireland were divided. Self-determination therefore necessarily implied agreement between the people of the North and the South. The question should be considered, not in terms of veto, which was the negative aspect, but in terms of agreement, which was the positive approach. He suggested Major might say that the whole world would like to see the people of Ireland reach agreement and repeat that the British Government would encourage that process by every means in its power and would endorse whatever form such agreement would take. In Hume's view that was the clearest possible recognition of the right of self-determination. On the other hand, to demand that the British should promote any particular option was not a demand for self-determination, but a demand for imposing a particular solution. Agreement between the people of Ireland could not be found with any form of coercion. Whatever form agreement took, the quarrel would be over and the healing process could begin.

6. Major had also raised with Hume the question of the Ancram talks. Hume, reflecting some concerns voiced by McGrady, questioned Major about Molyneaux's suggestion that a local Assembly and change of local government structures would be in place before the end of the year. Major said that that was Molyneaux's agenda but he pointed to a statement by Ancram that the talks were based firmly on the three-stranded process.
7. Hume had the impression, from talking to Chilcot after the meeting, that officials were sympathetic to his point of view on clarification. Chilcot had pointed to the terms of the first reply given by Major at Prime Minister's question time on Thursday. An opportunity would be found, possibly during the Northern Ireland debate on the 21st January, to adjust the balance of presentation so as to take account of nationalist susceptibilities also.
8. Hume mentioned also an (unconfirmed) rumour that up to 25 people had resigned from the IRA in Derry.

SO

Sean O hUiginn
17 January, 1994

cc PST
PSS
Mr F. Murray
Dr M. Haughey
Mr J. Dalton

Just see
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