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In his besting

CONFIDENTIAL

Conversation with John Hume

*Basireach
Do see please — in
particular Pts 9 & 10.*

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1. I was in contact with Mr. Hume last night about the SDLP meeting with Michael Ancram yesterday.
2. Hume said he had used the opportunity to talk to Ancram, and also separately to Chilcot, on the clarification issue. He argued again that, since the prize was great, the British should show flexibility on this issue. Hume had suggested to them, as a way off the clarification hook, "interpretation within the framework of the Declaration". He had made the point that such interpretation was routine in terms of Parliamentary bills at Westminster. He had recalled also that at the meeting between the party leaders and Major, Paisley, at the end of a long rant, had demanded clarification on paragraph 9 of the Declaration and had been assured it would be forthcoming.
3. The SDLP delegation objected in the strongest terms to the proposed new constituencies in the draft report of the Boundary Commission. They had recalled in vehement terms that Hume, Mallon and McGrady were the first ever Catholic MPs from these areas. To reverse that situation would cause a loss of faith in the democratic process as a whole. McGrady quoted the law to show that it was open to the Secretary of State to change the recommendations of the Boundary Commission if he so chose. Hume felt the strength of the SDLP reaction had somewhat shaken the British side.
4. On the Talks process, Hume repeated his familiar analysis about the SDLP seeking a solution while the other parties simply thought about sharing power. He stressed that peace was the greatest priority for the SDLP, since a background of peace would immeasurably improve the chances of success

of Talks. He was wary of a possible trap arising from British emphasis on the supposed near-agreement on Strand One issues. If these were conceded, he felt the Unionists would simply stand pat and make only minimal gestures in relation to Strand Two.

5. We had a brief discussion about Mallon's quoting from the June draft on the Farrell show on Sunday.
6. Mallon had in fact been in touch earlier in the day, in case his quotation might have caused problems for the Government. I told him the Government felt it had nothing to fear from publication of the earlier draft; rather the contrary. Any concerns would relate rather to whether Hume had given Adams any undertaking in that respect, or whether publication might be detrimental to any endeavours of Adams to persuade his followers. That was a matter between himself and the SDLP Leader.
7. Hume said he had received strong protests through the usual channels, which described Mallon's actions as "dishonourable".
8. I said there was a general feeling here that the heavy emphasis which Adams placed on the supposed difference between the two drafts was misleading, to say the least. There was a certain tolerance on the part of the Irish Government, out of a concern to avoid adding to Adams' difficulties. However Adams was hardly entitled to resort to moral indignation if someone like Mallon corrected the misunderstanding in a cautious and judicious way. My understanding was that Mallon did not propose to elaborate any further beyond the point he had made.
9. Hume agreed that Adams' position was questionable and said he had sent a strong message through the channels drawing

X | attention to the speeches made by the Taoiseach to clarify matters and criticising Adams for having ignored them. Hume said he had been trying to ring the Taoiseach at his personal number to convey his deep appreciation of the Taoiseach's efforts. He asked that that message be conveyed.

10. We discussed briefly which points precisely Sinn Fein wanted clarified, since that had not emerged clearly even from Adams' recent lengthy RTE interview. Hume's view is that the clarification relates essentially to the "demilitarisation" agenda. He noted that Mayhew's speech last week in the House of Commons had again picked up the phrase used in the November message delivered through the "conduit".
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Sean O hUiginn
25 January, 1994

cc PST
PSS
~~Mr. F. Hanrahan~~
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