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Reference Code: 2021/97/34

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SECRET

Meeting with Mr. John Hume

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MR. F. MURRAY

MR. P. TEAHON ✓

MR. S. DONLON

MR. T. DALTON

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1. I went to see Mr John Hume at his request last night. He briefed me on a meeting he had with Prime Minister Major on 24th July.
2. The meeting lasted something over an hour. Major was alone, (except for Lyne as note-taker). Hume found it a very open and frank meeting and was greatly encouraged by the tone of it.
3. Hume set out forcefully for Major that it was always envisaged that in the wake of a total cessation inclusive talks would take place without preconditions. He elaborated on the total change of mindset which had occurred on the nationalist side. The Prime Minister should spell out for unionists that this was the best offer ever. Unionists relied on, but did not trust the British Government. They could now negotiate their own agreement and protect their heritage for ever. He stressed the centrality of agreement to the whole equation and that extended to the arms question. He developed for Major the role of violence in Irish history from the Home Rule debates onwards, stressing that a surrender of arms had never happened. He proposed that Major should declare his intention to hold all-party talks beginning in September with an agenda which would include "the arms issues to be sorted out to the satisfaction of all sides".
4. Major stressed that he totally recognised the efforts Adams and McGuinness had made, their courage and the pressures on them. However he had to sort out decommissioning because of the pressures on him in the Tory party. He was open to any practical suggestion and ready to meet the republicans 'half-way'. He suggested they should agree to "park their weapons under the control of a third-party", and instanced Senator George Mitchell (Lyne objected that a US democrat might be unacceptable to unionists). He asked Hume to reassure Sinn Fein that he was not "playing games" but he had problems to overcome. He listed various concessions made to Sinn Fein, most of which Hume objected were merely the natural response to a reduced security threat.
5. There followed a discussion on the Tories. Major asked if it was more likely matters would succeed under a Tory administration. Hume confirmed this ("only Nixon would go to China") and said that there were Tories who wanted

Major to fail even at the cost of further bloodshed in Northern Ireland. Hume also criticised the timetable of summer '96 envisaged by Mayhew as far too slow.

6. Major reaffirmed that on the arms issue he "would not be ungenerous" and pleaded for almost anything which would get him off that particular hook with his party. Hume stressed the key role of inclusive dialogue without preconditions and the need for all party talks.
7. I briefed Hume on the Tanaiste's meeting with Mayhew and our broad thinking on a parallel approach, dealing with modalities in the first instance on both items. Hume pleaded that no mention be made of the Mitchell proposal (which he found both attractive and encouraging, since he feels any Commission should have a political intelligence guiding it).
8. Hume continues to take a robust view of the decommissioning issue, but appreciates the need to overcome a political road-block. He agreed that a key difficulty of "third party control" would be any implication that arms could be handed back to the IRA under any circumstances. Any such provisions would also be felt, also cast doubt on the "permanence" of the end of violence, the very point which had to be put beyond all doubt.
9. He remains fully supportive of Adams/McGuinness and in close contact with them. They had told him a fortnight before the ceasefires they had literally "put their heads on the line" for it. It was vital they should not be undermined.
10. Hume again pleaded for confidentiality and avoidance of leaks, which he felt were particularly unsettling for the delicate and sometimes paranoiac debates within the republican camp. He was also severely critical of what he saw as irresponsible leadership on the unionist side.

Sean O Huiginn
26 July 1995