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Meeting with John Hume

18 Sept 27
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MR. F MURRAY

MR. P TEAHON

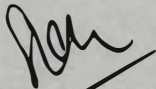
MR. S. DONLON

MR. T DALTON

1. I met John Hume on the 17th September.
2. In the wake of the SDLP meeting with Sir Patrick Mayhew on the 11th September, he had received the attached letter, which, to his irritation, had also been copied to the other MPs.
3. He is proposing to write to the Secretary of State in relation to (b) on the second page of the letter. (Hume's new text does not specify whether the "satisfaction of Governments" relates to the beginning or, alternatively, the outcome of talks. Accordingly the British have interpreted it as reflecting their own view that "Washington 3" is a pre-condition for Sinn Fein entry into talks). Hume intends his letter to restate his long-held positions that entry into talks should be without pre-conditions, and also that he regards the satisfactory resolution of the arms issue as a necessary part of any final agreement.
4. He repeated his exasperation at British tactics, and remains dismissive of the weapons issue in both directions, so to speak. He believes that the British have exaggerated its significance in a most counter-productive way, but that also Sinn Fein should seriously consider some substantial move. I said the Tanaiste had made a strong appeal to Martin McGuinness on this latter point recently, but had been told the risks were too high in terms of the internal Republican debate.
5. I briefed Mr. Hume on the broad lines of what we knew of the Adams/Washington contact. Hume agreed strongly that the "parallel approach" was the only game in town, and should be

developed. He threw out various suggestions as to how the "arbiter" idea might be made more palatable.

6. I told him the understandable American wariness of getting caught up in a brokerage position. They were anxious also to dampen down media speculation on that topic, and I generally stressed that too many competing texts and ideas only complicated matters.
7. Hume took an upbeat view of his meeting with Trimble. He had found Trimble reasonably positive (and looking forward to an early meeting with the Taoiseach). They agreed they would sustain and develop the joint approach to the British on matters of common interest, e.g. economic and social issues. He tended to welcome Trimble's likely intention to re-unite the unionist political spectrum. He felt that a united unionist front might make negotiations easier in the long term, although he accepted also it could result in the unionists as a whole being hostage to the DUP.
8. On the general outlook, Hume was insistent that talks should be launched without delay. However, he would expect such talks, once launched, to be very protracted. He would wish to develop the agenda of economic and social cooperation very intensively in parallel with such talks, believing that that agenda would greatly strengthen the climate for agreement.
9. He **was** interested - not to say eager - about reports of Sir Patrick Mayhew's possible retirement, quoting one Derry contact with "high level information" that it would happen in the next ten days.


Sean O hUiginn
18 September, 1995

Enc. 1



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11 September 1995

John Hume

I was very grateful for the opportunity to meet you and your colleagues this morning at Castle Buildings to discuss the current situation. I hope that you found it useful; I thought that there were several things discussed that might help move the process forward.

As we discussed, I thought it would also be helpful if I were to set out my understanding of the key points that we discussed, centring on the text which you told us at the meeting you had agreed with Mr Adams, copy attached.

In our ensuing discussions on all-party talks, the following points as to the meaning and intent of a developed text emerged:

- (a) The first phase of the inclusive talks described in the text would be preparatory in nature, and would not constitute the substantive political discussions you describe as round table talks. The specified aim would be to lay the ground work for the start of all-party round table substantive talks by a particular date or, in Eddie McGrady's phrase, to do the housekeeping.



- (b) The preparatory talks would be tri-lateral/bi-lateral in character, though we would not rule out the prospect of moving to a round table format in that preparatory phase if all were agreeable.
- (c) I indicated that a more realistic target date for the start of substantive round-table all-party talks would in my view be mid-December rather than early November, but that a 'not later than' formula could be employed.

On the question of decommissioning and an international commission, we discussed the following main points:

- (a) It was not clear whether the phrase 'all arms' in the text was intended to refer only to illegal arms held by the paramilitaries, or whether it also covered legally held arms including those held by the security forces. I said that it would be necessary for the text to specify that the commission was there to deal with illegally held arms, but to say explicitly once again that movement on this front would consequentially enable further troop reductions to be made, on the advice on the Chief Constable, leading ultimately to our objective of totally 'civilian' policing if the progress were maintained. It was made clear that the Government could not accept the broader of the two meanings.
- (b) It would be important to establish that Sinn Fein could envisage the international body helping to



produce progress, satisfactory to both Governments, on illegally-held arms to the extent that the IRA could make a start on decommissioning these, before round table all-party substantive talks began; in other words, that this would not necessarily be ruled out as surrender.

- (c) The role of the commission should be specified as to be to advise or help the Governments, and not to arbitrate in some binding manner. We would need to find a title that reflected this.
- (d) On that understanding, the Government could be flexible over the title of the body if that helped assuage Sinn Fein sensitivities. I said a single commissioner was not acceptable to the Government. It is not simply a question of ensuring that he has expert advice. It is more a concern that responsibility for the report will all rest with one person. Our understanding is that if we were looking for an American to head the body, the US Administration would not be happy about having only a single commissioner. We also believed that unionists would reject such a concept.
- (e) In respect of Senator Mitchell, you said that while Sinn Fein favoured him and you understood this was also the position of the two Governments, you did not judge that Sinn Fein would regard his participation as essential. I said the British Government did not have a concluded view.



I should also record the general point I made that our over-riding objective is to get to inclusive all-party talks and that therefore we need to generate the confidence amongst all the relevant parties to ensure that they can participate. Substantial progress as we have defined it on decommissioning is the only way that we can at present see to generate that confidence. We would however obviously look carefully and on their merits at all recommendations of an independent body such as was under discussion.

For convenience, I am copying this to Seamus Mallon, Joe Hendron and Eddie McGrady.

*Thank you again for coming -
Yours sincerely,
Robin*

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We are now beginning the all party talks phase of the peace process which will lead to round table talks involving all parties by (early November date).

Parallel to this process both Governments have asked Senator George Mitchell to act as an International Arbiter to ensure that the question of all arms, now thankfully silenced, is settled to the satisfaction of both Governments.