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CONSULATE GENERAL OF IRELAND
345 PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY 10154-0037

TELEPHONE
(212) 319-2555
FAX
(212) 980-9475

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Sec. Gallagher,
Joint Secretary,
Amb. London
A-I Counsellors

N1/9/2

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TO: HQ, ANGLO IRISH

FROM: Brenda Carmichael

ATTENTION: DERMOT BRANGAN

Attached for information is transcript of John Hume's interview on the Charlie Rose programme on PBS/Ch. 13 last evening.

cc A. O'Neill (Washington)

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Transcript

DATE November 24, 1998
TIME 11:00 PM-12:00 AM
NETWORK PBS
PROGRAM Charlie Rose

Charlie Rose, host:

There have been many people involved in the peace process in Northern Ireland, but perhaps no one has been as successful in actually producing results as two men from opposite ends of the political spectrum. They are John Hume and David Trimble. Last month, they were rewarded for their courage and sacrifice with the Nobel Peace Prize. John Hume is the leader of the Social Democratic and Labor Party, the main Catholic party in the region. He was behind one of the major breakthroughs in the peace process, getting the IRA to come to the table. I am pleased to have him back on this broadcast, the first time since he won the Nobel Peace Prize. Welcome back.

John Hume (Nobel Laureate): Thank you very much, Charlie.

Rose: A new fact for me...

Hume: Yeah.

Rose: Seamus Heaney, who has also been on this program a couple times...

Hume: Yeah.

Rose: A Nobel laureate, and you...

Hume: Yeah.

Rose: ...grew up together.

Hume: Oh, yes. We--Seamus and I both attended the same school in my home city of Derry, St. Colin's College. And of course, the school is now very proud, but it's the only school in the world that has got two Nobel laureates.

Rose: All right. What's the name of the school?

Hume: St. Colin's College in Derry.

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Rose: St. Colin's College. Let's hear it. Two Nobel laureates comes out of the same school.

Hume: Yeah.

Rose: Tell me, when you got the news of this honor...

Hume: Yes.

Rose: What were your thoughts?

Hume: Well, I was obviously very honored. But I--I regarded it not as a personal reward to myself. I regarded it as a very powerful statement from one of the most respected institutions in the world, the Nobel--the Nobel Institute. A very powerful statement of support for the peace process and all its aspects of Northern Ireland, and--and strong support for peace on our streets and therefore for all of our people. And I think that in that sense it strengthened the peace process, because it allowed--it showed once again to the people on our streets that the international community, as a whole, are very sympathetic to our situation and very supportive of peace in our country.

Rose: Now do you have any quarrel with the fact that David Trimble, in a sense seemed to be working against peace for a large part of his life, but in the last three years or so has consistently been part of the process?

Hume: Well, if we didn't have a divided society, we wouldn't have had a problem.

Rose: Yes. That's right.

Hume: And of--of course, as I have said throughout, when your problem is that you're a deeply divided people, the answer can only be agreement. Victory for one side over the other in any divided society will not solve your problem. It has too be agreement.

Rose: Are--are...

Hume: And of course, we've got an agreement which respects the identity of both sections of our people. And that's a very important element in solving the problems of divided societies; and of course, creates the circumstances. As I have said, the agreement in itself is not a solution, but it creates the framework in which the solution will really take place. Because when you have a deeply divide people and they're divided for centuries, and at the heart of that division is the distrust and the prejudices, you don't get rid of that in a week or a fortnight. It requires what I call a healing process.

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And what our agreement now does, it sets up the institutions, democratic institutions which will ensure that both sections of our people will work together in their common interests; and their common interests, of course, is very substantial, the whole economic sphere. And by working together, spilling their sweat, as I often say, and not their blood, then they will breakdown the barriers of centuries and a new society will evolve in Ireland--the new Ireland the new North and the new Ireland. Based on agreement and respect for differences--and the old hatreds and prejudices of the past will be eroded. And the distrust will be eroded and replaced with trust.

And that's the healing process that--that this agreement will set in motion. And that's the challenge now facing us as we move into the next century, which naturally I hope and dream will be first century in our island history in which there will be no killings on our streets. And no emigration of our young people to other lands to earn a living.

Rose: How long will that healing process take?

Hume: I don't know, but I--I want it to take place as soon as possible, obviously. But what I want to see is the--both sections working together, spilling their sweat and not their blood. And, in fact, as I have said in many speeches here in this country, our approach is modeled on previous experience of other successful conflict resolutions.

I say, for example, European Union is the best example in the history of the world of conflict resolution. And I was very heavily inspired by my European experience and remember the European Parliament. Indeed, when I was first elected to that parliament in 1979, I went for a walk in Straussburg in France. I went for a walk across the bridge from Straussburg to Kale in Germany. That's how close France and Germany are. I stopped in the middle of the bridge, 1979, and I thought, and I said to myself: If I had stood on this bridge thirty years ago, which is just after the Second World War, when twenty-five million people were dead for the second time in a century, and the same people in Europe slaughtered one another for centuries. But if I had said then: Don't worry. In thirty years time we'll all be united in Europe and the French will still be French and the Germans will still be Germans, I would have been sent to a psychiatrist; but it happened.

The European Union is the best example in the history of the world of conflict resolution, when you look at the u--united Europe now. And the French are still French and the Germans are still German. How did they do it? I feel it's the duty of areas of conflict everywhere to study how they did it.

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And how they did it is quite simple. At the end of the day then, all profound things in life are actually simple. They decided that difference is not a threat. That the answer to difference is respect. And when you look at all conflict, what's it about? Difference. Whether it's your race, your religion, your nationality, or your ethnicity. That's what all conflicts and wars are about. And the answer is to recognize that difference is an accident of birth. None of us chose to be born. And whatever community we were born into was not our choice. So why fight about it? Respect the difference and build institutions, that's what they did in Europe--which respected their differences, but allowed them to work together in their common interests which were economic. To spill their sweat and not their blood.

And the new Europe has evolved and is still evolving with no victory for anyone, but with great respect for each other. That's precisely the philosophy that we are now applying in Northern Ireland, respect for difference. Institutions which do that, but which allow us to work together, and by working together to breakdown the barrier. And, you see, that philosophy, when you think of it, is the philosophy founded the very country I'm sitting in now.

Rose: The United States?

Hume: Yes. I...

Rose: We went to war for our independence?

Hume: I once went--well, I'm not talking about independence. I'm talking about the Constitution of the country. And--look at your cent and you'll see the message of wisdom for the whole world written on that cent. And if you'll find--if you can't read it on the cent because the printing is too small, you'll find it on the grave of Abraham Lincoln.

Rose: And what does it say?

Hume: E. Pluribus Unum.

Rose: From many...

Hume: From many we are one. The essence of our unity is respect for diversity. And that, when you think of it, is the real philosophy of peace. And the founders of the United States were people who were driven from their own countries by famine, deprivation, intolerance, injustice, and when they got here decided that the same thing wasn't going to happen in their own land. And they built the Constitution, which respected their differences, when you look at the nature of the American system of government

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state by state plus--plus the central system. And of course, the only thing that has ever threatened the stability in the United States ever since has been when--when some people wanted to...

Rose: To see--to tear the union apart.

Hume: To move away from respecting difference.

Rose: Right.

Hume: As in discrimination against people of a different race, et cetera. But as I say, that fundamental message, E. Pluribus Unum, from many we are one, the essence of unity is respect for diversity, is a very powerful message of peace for the world.

Rose: Having said that...

Hume: Yeah.

Rose: Do you think then that the Middle East ought to be able to listen to those principles and solve the problems of the differences between Israel and the Palestinians, between Israel and her Arab neighbors?

Hume: Oh, yes. I think that...

Rose: That's doable?

Hume: I think that if they come to the conclusion, as we have and indeed as has to happen, that the division--it's a division of people. It is people that have rights, not territory. Any piece of Earth, whether it's Ireland or whether it's Palestine or whether it's Israel, are only jungles if there's no people. And when people are divided, it's agreement among the people that's required, not one piece of Earth taking over another piece of Earth. And therefore what I would like to see obviously in every area of conflict, is the representatives of the people from the different sides of the quarrel coming together and agreeing institutions which will respect their differences but will allow them then to work together. And...

Rose: Right.

Hume: Like the more the people--the more the people work and live together, the more they realize what--what they have in common far outweighs whatever they differ about.

Rose: Let me take you from those noble words...

Hume: Yeah.

Rose: ...ideas, visions to the reality on the ground...

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Hume: Yeah.

Rose: Where you still have people killing people, not just people, children. Is that going to derail this process?

Hume: Well...

Rose: Is it strong enough to withstand the obscenity of people killing children in the name of political ends?

Hume: Well, there--there was--in recent times, there was a terrible tragedy in the town of Omagh in Northern Ireland when a splinter group...

Rose: Right.

Hume: ...wanted to keep the violence going and they killed twenty-nine people in one day, which was the worst we ever had. But the reaction to that was so powerful among the people that I think--and so very powerful, that it undermined completely the existence of such groups in the future. Because what came across very clearly in the terrible tragedy of Omagh, was that our common humanity and the common humanity of the people of Omagh transcended very powerfully their differences. And that the opposition to the violence was demonstrated in a manner that never before was demonstrated.

And of course, in addition, let's remember something that has happened in Ireland that never has happened in our history before. With this agreement, the final word wasn't with the politicians. The final word was with the people when they endorsed it in a referendum, a joint referendum in the north and south of Ireland on the one day. And they endorsed it overwhelmingly.

Rose: Right. And speaking...

Hume: And that strengthened the process enormously, because anyone who now opposes it, is opposing the will of the people.

Rose: Speaking of that referendum, was it necessary and how important was it for you and David Trimble to be seen together, photographed together right before the referendum to show something about how many differences had been healed?

Hume: Well given that we were both campaigning for the same answer, which was yes, it was right and proper that we should both stand together, particularly with the young generation. And we were brought together by Bono of U2 and--and--and the hall full of young people.

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Rose: Yeah.

Hume: And it was a very moving moment. But it was right and proper that given that we were asking the people from both sides of our divide to have the same response in the referendum, to say: Yes. It was right and proper we should do that. And the more--the more we work together, the better.

Rose: What do you worry about? What could tear asunder what you and others have worked so hard to build?

Hume: Well, there are always those who know what they're against and they never know what they're for. People with the mentality when they see an agreement or--or a proposal of any description, they're always looking for what's wrong in it. There's people with that sort of mentality instead of looking for what's right in it. Because nothing is perfect in--in life. So when you have something that's positive, my attitude is build on the positive.

I never--one of my earliest lessons in life was from my own mother when I was growing up as a child. My father was unemployed. She would always say: Son, listen. Do you see that bottle of water? It's always half-full. It's not half-empty. Always look at the positive in life. And when you think of it, that's a very powerful message, because no matter what is put before you in life, it's not perfect. But if you look at the positive, you can then build and improve and improve. Whereas, if you look at the negative, you wreck immediately. And I think that what we have to do is to keep the positive mind to the forefront.

Rose: And those looking at the positive are in the majority today?

Hume: Very much so. I mean, there are some people in Northern Ireland, I've said if you took the word no out of the English language, they would be speechless, you know. Because no this and no that, you know?

Rose: Yeah.

Hume: But I hope now we're moving into a new positive future together.

Rose: Is decommissioning an issue that will--has the potential to do damage to this process?

Hume: Well, it has become an issue. And I regard it as a--as a distraction because as I have said, the real issue about weapons is not decommissioning. The real issue is: Are those who have been using them telling the truth when they say that they have stopped using them? That's the real issue. Because if those people were playing games,

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they could hand over their guns on Monday--decommission their guns on Monday and secretly recommission them on Tuesday.

Rose: So it's what's in their head and heart rather than what's in their...

Hume: It's what's in their head and heart.

Rose: ...rather than their hardware.

Hume: Because also, as anyone would know in the ending of conflict situations, nobody wants to--it's a psychological factor. Nobody wants to be seen as surrendering. The fact is that--that--and the important fact is that the guns are silent. And I believe they are. And indeed the chief of the police in Northern Ireland just last weekend made it very--what I regard as a very clear statement, saying that he fully felt that the guns were now silent. And he would know from all his sources. And I believe that to be so myself, of course.

But we should also remember that the decommissioning issue has been dealt with in the agreement. Not as a precondition to putting their agreement into being, but that the decommissioning would happen or disarmament would happen to the satisfaction of all sides. But it would happen parallel to the implementation of the agreement, and it would be carried out to the satisfaction of an international commission under the chairmanship of General Ducastalin(SP) from Canada. And I think that is the way--and--and that is supposed to happen within a two-year time frame.

Rose: What do you say to your friends in Northern Ireland, your Catholic friends, who dreamed of a Northern Ireland united as part of one Ireland?

Hume: Well, I say to them what I have been saying for very many years in representing them and saying it--and they have strongly voted for it--is that the people of Ireland are divided, not the territory. The line on the map is not the real border in Ireland. It's a symptom of a much deeper border, which is in the minds and hearts of people. It's a people of Ireland were not divided, there wouldn't be no border. (sic) And of course, that's a real border.

And when you have a deeply divided people, as I said at the beginning when I was--today, you can't solve it if one side has victory over the other. It can only be solved by agreement. And that's why I have always campaigned for what I called an agreed Ireland, where we get an Ireland where the people of the island agree on how they share that piece of Earth together. And that's what has now happened for the first time in our history. Because in that

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referendum, seventy-one percent of the people in the north voted yes, and over ninety percent of the people of the south voted yes.

Rose: They voted yes for what?

Hume: For the new institutions, for how we would share the piece of Earth together, which was the new institutions of government in Ireland, north and south. Listen, in the north, an assembly elected by proportional representation which means that all sections of our people are there. And then the assembly will proportionately elect its government. The relations with the south will be a north-south council, ministerial council, which means that ministers from the north and the south will meet together and by agreement, will work on matters of common interest to both parts of the island, like tourism, like the environment, like agriculture, matters that are of common concern to both. And over the years will work together in--in--in handling those problems by agreement, so there's no question of takeovers.

Rose: Could you see a day that concern...

Hume: But--but--but you see the point I'm making is that once that happens for a period of time, the trust will replace the distrust.

Rose: And what happens after the trust misplaces distrust?

Hume: A new Ireland will evolve...

Rose: A new...

Hume: Based on agreement and respect for difference with no victory to either side. And the model of it will probably...

Rose: Be...

Hume: ...be--be very different from any of the traditional models of the past. I don't know what it will be. That will be decide in a generation or two. But it will be a real Ireland, and it will be an agreed Ireland in which all its people will be living together in agreement and harmony. And I believe it will be a very powerful Ireland, as well. Because as I have said as we move into the next century, in peace and stability...

Rose: You're saying...

Hume: We'll become the offshore island of the United States of America and the United States of Europe.

Rose: Let's just work together.

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Hume: Yes.

Rose: What--what was the darkest moment in this long process for you?

Hume: Well, the darkest moments were always the loss of human life. Because when you're a public representative and your job is to try and solve this problem, and human beings are killed, you feel a deep sense of failure. And of course, one of the great tragedies of having achieved peace and stability is the one thing that we can't do is bring those people out of their graves. And that's an awful tragedy. Particularly for--for themselves and for their families. But the one thing that I--that I hope we now can do is build an eternal monument to those people who have lost their lives.

Rose: Wouldn't that be a peace that prevails?

Hume: That eternal monument would be that we now have a land in which they are the last generation to have suffered that, and that no future generation will ever suffer.

Rose: And the chance of that happening is eighty-twenty?

Hume: I think it's very positive, because never before in our history have so many of our people on the one day come out and voted together for how we share the piece of Earth. And that is very powerful. Because let's not forget that in the past all the paramilitary organizations always argued that there they were acting in the name of the people, because the systems of government that we had in the past had never been endorsed by the people in referenda or anything else. And this was a claim, but now that claim is gone because the people have spoken. And it's our duty now to work together and implement the agreement.

Rose: Let me--let me make a couple points. Are you stepping away from politics?

Hume: Oh, no. Not at all.

Rose: You're not?

Hume: I'm very happily involved.

Rose: You're not. So you're not--you're not taking any breather from all of this?

Hume: No. I--I didn't take the position in government--in the new government...

Rose: Right. As general.

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Hume: Because I am already overworked.

Rose: Right.

Hume: I'm a member of the European Parliament and I'm a member of the parliament in London, as well. So, I--I mean, I'm a human being, and--and I couldn't take on anymore work. But I look forward to strongly working with the new administration, as we all work together. And one of the areas that I'm looking forward to is harnessing the international goodwill, particularly in the United States, for our--our land.

Rose: So what do you want the United States to do?

Hume: Well, what your president has already promised, economic assistance. But what we mean, in fact, will be to persuade American companies who are looking for locations in Europe to locate in our region.

Rose: Good labor?

Hume: And also marketing the products of our small and medium-sized enterprises in the United States. I--I think that wh--wh--when an American company locates in Northern Ireland, they're not just coming to Northern Ireland anymore, they're coming to the biggest single market in the world, which is the European Union, a market of over three hundred and fifty billion people. As an objective one region of that, we can give the highest grants for start-up costs to companies in order to help us solve our problems of unemployment. And that's going to be central to our working together. Because if working together and using our energies to build a new society rather than to quarrel as we have done in the past, I think that that--that will transform our society if we are successful in getting the inward investment and giving hope to our young people.

Rose: Let me ask about some personnel. Do you now call David Trimble a brother?

Hume: I have never used language like that. No. I--I--I--David Trimble and I are fellow citizens. We have our differences. If we didn't have our differences, we wouldn't have had a problem.

Rose: But you--you've grown to admire and respect him?

Hume: What--what--no--what we have grown to do is to create institutions which respect the identities of both sections of our people, of the people that we represent, to respect one another, and to work together.

Rose: And Gerry Adams?

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Hume: And the same with Gerry Adams. Gerry Adams and myself, we started dialogue and--and--and when we started our dialogue, we were very heavily criticized for doing so. I was--I was heavily criticized, in particular, for talking to Gerry Adams. But we both made clear the objective of our dialogue was number one, the complete end to violence followed by all party talks whose objective would be agreement among our divide people.

Rose: As far as you're concerned...

Hume: That would have to be an agreement of loyalty with both sections of our people. That's precisely what has happened. And of course, as I said in my speech to my party Congress last week, Gerry Adams and Mark McGuinness played a very positive role of leadership in bringing their people and the people that supported them and their organizations into the whole peace process, as indeed did David Trimble and his supporters in his party.

Rose: President Clinton...

Hume: Mm-hmm.

Rose: What did he do?

Hume: Well, as I said...

Rose: Other than promise American aid and support for...

Hume: Well--well, President Clinton put peace in Ireland right at the top of his agenda from day one, and there was never any doubt about that. And his support for peace and for our peace process was very central to strengthening the whole peace process, and there's no doubt that the people of Ireland regard him as a great friend and they know that they owe him deep gratitude. For--I mean, it's quite natural that there should be an interest in the United States in what's happening in Ireland because in the last census in the United States, forty-two million people said that they were of Irish roots.

Rose: Yes. I know.

Hume: So it's very natural that President Clinton was the first president to really put it at the top of his agenda and...

Rose: How about...

Hume: And...

Rose: Go ahead. Sorry.

Hume: And of course--well, of course, I have to also say

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because I've been working for years knowing that the American dimension was very important to our--our problem and to its resolution, we've had very powerful support from senators and congressmen throughout those years in seeking peace and justice in our land. And of course, they laid the foundations on which the president then built.

Rose: What did George Mitchell do?

Hume: George Mitchell chaired our talks process.

Rose: What did he do? I know his title?

Hume: He sat in the chair over a very difficult period of time, listening to all the arguments of the past. He showed enormous patience and, of course, his enormous commitment to achieving an agreement. And there's no doubt it was an outstanding role he played. And again, he has the loyalty and gratitude of all sections of our people.

Rose: Should other people have been included in the Nobel Prize?

Hume: Well, as I say, when I received the prize, I regarded it not as an award to myself and David Trimble, the fact that it was the both of us representing both sections of our people, I saw that as an award to all of the people of Northern Ireland.

Rose: For all Catholics and all Protestants and all people.

Hume: Yeah. To everyone. Yeah. And to everyone who had played a part in the peace process, because it was a powerful recognition by the Nobel Institute that peace was on our streets and a powerful statement of support for that peace.

Rose: When will British troops leave?

Hume: Well, they have begun to leave. That is part of the agreement.

Rose: Yeah.

Hume: The demilitarization of our situation and the disarmament process. And of course, there--there has already been a transformation on our streets. And that has strengthened the peace process enormously for ordinary people, because they now have normality on their streets. When they go into shops, they're not searched anymore.

Rose: Right. Right.

Hume: There are no tanks on our streets.

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Rose: I'll bet that takes some of the tension out of it right there.

Hume: Yeah. It takes a lot of the tension out of it. And the troops are being steadily withdrawn by the British government.

Rose: You are here in the United States to receive an honorary degree from Fordham Law?

Hume: Yes.

Rose: Fordham. I graduated Fordham.

Hume: Yeah.

Rose: I own a college.

Hume: Yes.

Rose: You're being treated with a dinner by the...

Hume: Irish Echo.

Rose: Irish Echo newspaper.

Hume: Yeah.

Rose: You'll go to Washington. Will you see the president?

Hume: Oh, yes. We--we will be in Washington on the eighth of December, I understand. And we will be meeting with the president there. But that--that's--I'm going home tomorrow, but I will be back in December. And of course, I will be very glad to meet with all my friends in the Senate and Congress that have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with us over many difficult years. I'm very glad to meet and thank the president directly.

Rose: Thank you for stopping by on this visit to see us. Congratulations on the Nobel Prize, all these honorary degrees and all the accolades that are coming your way and for all those that you represent.

Hume: Thank you very much.

Rose: John Hume, a major pivotal role in creating the process and hard work that went into achieving peace in Northern Ireland.

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