

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Sec. Gallagher, cc'd
Joint Secretary,
Amb. London & Wash,
A-I Counsellors

N1/9/2

2 December 1998

To: **Dermot Brangan, Anglo-Irish Division, HQ**

From: **Barrie Robinson, Consul General, New York**

c.c. *Pat Hennessy, Embassy Washington; Sile Maguire, Anglo-Irish Division*

Visit of John Hume to New York

1. John Hume visited New York last week as a guest of the *Irish Echo* newspaper which honoured him and his wife Pat at its 70th anniversary dinner. It was his first journey here since the announcement of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize, which appreciably amplified the impact of the visit and afforded his long standing supporters in the city's Irish American community an opportunity to join in celebrating his achievement. He was conferred with an honorary doctorate of laws by Fordham University, was also honoured by Iona College where he addressed an audience of some 500 faculty, alumni and guests and appeared on the Adrian Flannelly radio programme. He undertook a number of mainstream media engagements including the Charlie Rose PBS television show, lunch with the editorial board of Newsweek and a meeting with New York Times editorial writers arranged by the Consulate.

2. The main themes of his public remarks are encapsulated in the transcript of his interview with Charlie Rose which has already been copied to you. The discussion at the New York Times centred, somewhat to Hume's disappointment, on decommissioning and policing. He repeated his view that the current focus on decommissioning is a distraction. The real issue was that the weapons were no longer being used and he quoted a recent statement by the

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the Chief Constable of the RUC expressing the belief that the main paramilitary organisations were observing their ceasefires. There were important psychological factors at work. Many members of these organisations had become involved at a young age. While they were now older and wiser, they were reluctant to admit that the methods employed in pursuit of their cause had been wrong or to be seen to surrender. The best way forward was to implement the Good Friday Agreement, including its provisions on decommissioning, in their totality.

3. He said that the new institutions provided for in the Agreement should be in place by February. He hoped that early agreement would be reached on the portfolios in the Northern Executive and North-South structures to pave the way for this. It was important that the Executive should encompass the widest possible representation of the parties in line with the inclusive philosophy of the Agreement and to this end the maximum permissable number of ten Ministerial portfolios should be created. The Agreement was not in itself a solution, but provided a framework in which all sections of the community could cooperate on their common economic interests. US investment would be a crucial part of this process and companies would receive an excellent return as the North had much to offer as a business location.

4. On policing, he recalled that the Patten Commission is deliberating and he did not wish to anticipate its outcome. The problems in this area were a symptom of a divided society. They could only be addressed in the context of the creation of institutions within the framework of the Agreement which could attract the loyalty and confidence of both sections of the community. He did say, however, that he favoured some decentralisation in policing structures.

5. *Newsweek* intends to carry a major feature at the end of the year on the question of legal accountability in post-conflict situations for past human rights breaches and terrorist actions, prompted inter alia by the Pinochet extradition proceedings and the outcome of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They are interested in securing a contribution from Hume on the subject either in the form of an article or an interview (they will pursue this directly with him). He does not favour a South African style commission in Northern Ireland as he fears this would reinforce the tendency

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to rehearse grievances and undermine the effort to encourage people to look forward and draw a line under past divisions.

6. I understand that Hume also arranged to meet before his departure with Ann Lamberson, the Derry born ambulance diver who is facing manslaughter charges arising out of an accident in New York City. In discussion beforehand, he confirmed that he was conscious of the risks associated with any public intervention by him in the substance of the case and said that he would confine himself to recalling that he had asked the Irish Government through the Consulate to monitor the proceedings.

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