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CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting between the Governments and the SDLP

26 April 1999

Taoiseach

I agree that the Kelly article shows a strong positive disposition with the extra 1½ allocated for reconciliation by the Govt., there is hope for a comprehensive approach to victims' concerns. I shall put idea to Sec-General Taoiseach on this basis 29.4.99

1. The two Governments met with an SDLP delegation at Parliament Buildings in Stormont on 26 April 1999. The delegation was led by party leader, John Hume and included Assembly members, Mark Durkan, Bríd Rodgers, Seán Farren and Denis Haughey. The Government delegations were led by Ministers of State O'Donnell and Murphy.

2. Hume briefed the meeting on his recent initiative. He had met with David Trimble and stressed to the UUP leader that the permanent threat of expulsion from office, contained in his formula and related to any breakdown in the ceasefires, was much more meaningful than a single decommissioning gesture. Trimble, however, replied that he needed actual decommissioning.

3. Hume said he suggested to Trimble that both of them meet privately with Adams to try and break the impasse. Trimble agreed but only if his deputy, John Taylor, was present. He said that Taylor had better personal relations with Sinn Féin than he had. However, Taylor was away on Council of Europe business, and would not return until Friday. The meting had, therefore, been arranged for that day (although we have since learned that a preliminary session was subsequently scheduled for today).

4. Hume said that Sinn Féin had warmed to his initiative after an initial guarded response. They had also spoken to their "friends" about it.

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5. Minister Murphy asked if Trimble could live with "words" rather than decommissioning. Hume replied that Trimble still believed that he needed actual guns to be handed over.

6. Minister O'Donnell felt that the best prospect of success lay with the two main protagonists, Adams and Trimble, getting together in a room to sort the impasse out. Hume agreed and said that his own preference was to have Trimble and Adams meet alone under his chairmanship. As this was not possible, all the deputy leaders would now be present.

7. Hume added that he regarded the IRA Easter statement as significant. He mentioned that they had stated that the Good Friday Agreement offered the potential for a durable peace. They had also stressed that the guns were silent. Hume added that the recent article by Gerry Kelly in the Irish News (attached) was interesting also in terms of helpful language. There might well be potential in this language which could be developed for use in any future IRA declaration.

Ray Bassett
Anglo-Irish Division
28 April 1999

cc: PST; PSM; PSMS
Mr. Teahon; Dr. Mansergh; Mr. Dalton; PSSG
Ambassadors Washington & London; Joint Secretary
Counsellors A-I

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