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① Mr Hume *off 12/8*
No see please
② PA → S. 21222
S. 19003

Meeting with SDLP Delegation

17 July 1980

A press release issued after the meeting is attached.

It indicates the participants at the meeting. The Taoiseach and Minister for Foreign Affairs were accompanied by Mr Nally, Secretary to the Government and by Mr Neligan.

Opening the meeting, which he described as timely, the Taoiseach said that he would propose that each side agree on a statement to be issued at the end of the meeting and indicated that a draft had been prepared. He invited Mr Hume to describe the present situation and in particular the outcome of the SDLP Constituency Representatives meeting at the weekend and on any contacts he might have had with the Northern Ireland office. Where did Mr Hume think we should go from here?

Mr Hume said his delegation greatly welcomed the close cooperation always extended by the Government and agreed that this meeting was particularly timely. The Constituency Representatives had concluded at their meeting that agreement in Northern Ireland on the Atkins proposals for discussion was certainly impossible because the Unionists had rejected them. However the Party had welcomed some positive statements in the White Paper, particularly reference to the necessity that new institutions must be based on consent and reference to the development of the unique relationship between Britain and Ireland. They wished to concentrate on these two aspects. The Atkins proposals were dead. Molyneaux had refused to take part in talks and had rejected both options. Paisley had rejected the first option and had said he could only consider the second option if security were to be included amongst the devolved powers.

As regards contacts with the NIO, Hume said he had seen Sir Kenneth Stowe and James Wyatt at their request in Derry on 14 July. They had openly accepted that the two discussion proposals were dead and they agreed that they need not go over

that ground. In the view of Stowe and Wyatt the Northern Ireland Office is at present involved on two fronts namely internal contacts within Northern Ireland and wider contacts, i.e. including Dublin. Progress on these fronts should be made in parallel. They asked how did the SDLP think this should be done. Hume had replied that he saw development of the wider contacts through talks between the Taoiseach and Mrs. Thatcher and he suggested that a meeting between them should be brought forward to before the re-opening of Parliament.

The Taoiseach intervened to say that Mrs. Thatcher and himself had agreed in Venice to meet in September but he was not sure to what extent Mrs. Thatcher had been concentrating at the time on the implications of her acceptance of that timing.

Mr. Hume said that input to thinking at this stage concerning the next phase in the process would be welcome. Stowe had indicated that he would be meeting Ambassador Kennedy in London on 18 July. Hume felt that he should say to Atkins that agreement is impossible on the two proposals now put forward for discussion. The British guarantee has frozen the unionists in their intransigence. Although they have had full backing in this regard from Britain unionist cooperation has been totally absent and enough should be enough for the British. Hume had noted the statement in the White Paper (para. 19) that the continued position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom should not become a bargaining counter to secure agreement to a particular form of political institution. The British had stated the principle of consent by a majority in Northern Ireland. That was all right but how about British consent? Consent by the British to a new political line up in Ireland must be the first step towards realising such a change. If such active consent could be achieved then the next stage should be quadripartite talks with three points on the agenda namely Northern Ireland, the North-South relationship and the Irish-British relationship.

Mr. Hume said he would lay much store by the third point. The British-Irish relationship was a key factor but we should beware lest the British tried to get what they want from the third point without yielding in corresponding measure on points one and two.

The British representatives said they thought the time had come for the British to enquire what structures did we want in Ireland. Did we want federation? What links with Britain would be appropriate? Stowe and his colleague asked what would the Republic under take if the British moved in the direction we are suggesting. They asked where would the money required for maintaining Northern Ireland (£1.2 billion) come from? They also said that they would not expect the SDLP to talk with Atkins about the two discussion proposals. The SDLP had received messages that the NIO was pushing option No. 2 but this was not what Stowe and Wyatt had said to Hume.

The Taoiseach said that it was a tantalising situation. How could we put forward a proposal now to get us away from the White Paper into another situation?

Mr. Hume said we would not now be engaging in normal Anglo-Irish conversations. We would be raising the profile of the Northern Ireland problem in a new way. The SDLP had pushed the British so far for instance through the parallel conference. We should think about other proposals now.

The Taoiseach said that as a first point we should press for a meeting with the British Prime Minister in September for the purpose of exploring possible progress in Northern Ireland. Meanwhile he said a relatively senior official (Mr. Moriarty of the NIO) would be coming to Dublin on 23 July. The Taoiseach presumed that he would follow the same line in his remarks as Mr. Stowe had done.

Mr. Hume said it would be very interesting if we got the same feed back as the SDLP. He thought it was very significant that Mrs. Thatcher had said to the Taoiseach in Venice "we are holding the fort".

The Taoiseach thought Mrs. Thatcher had navigated out of the channel on Northern Ireland policy and did not know where to go. Mr. Hume remarked that we need time to shift her from the ideas

of Airey Neave but we should not underestimate the strength of the friends we had inside the Cabinet. Corroborating this point Séamus Mallon said the aim should be to give a safe landing to the conference, that is to give it a happy death. Alistair Cooke of the Tory party had expressly shared this objective when Mallon had recently been in London. Hume said that the Tory right wing is getting ratty with the unionists.

The Taoiseach referred to the gas pipe line question and assured the SDLP representatives that there was enough gas in the Kinsale field to supply domestic utilities in Cork, Dublin and Northern Ireland cities. The gas business was a big card. Hume confirmed that the unionist parties were concerned and angry about the closure of the Northern Ireland gas industry. Mr. Nally having referred to the problem of timing given the early date for closing gas undertakings in the North, the Taoiseach expressed the hope that the Northern facilities would try to hang on if the offer of gas from Dublin were held out. The Government were in principle in favour of offering gas to Northern Ireland. Appreciation was expressed by the SDLP in this regard.

The Taoiseach indicated that he wished to make a speech in the course of the coming weeks addressed to the unionists and saying that Northern Ireland is running into the ground. He wished to say what we could offer economically in this situation. Did the SDLP representatives think that this sort of thing would go down well with the SDLP's supporters?

Mr. Hume said this would be entirely acceptable and was a very good idea. The Taoiseach might spell out the advantage of closer association with Dublin. Mr. Currie asked how did the current levels of social security compare. The Taoiseach replied that the comparison was not unfavourable and that Irish social security benefits would be better than the British before long if Mrs. Thatcher kept going the way she is.

Reverting to the earlier discussion on strategy the Taoiseach observed that our next contact would be with Mr. Moriarty in Dublin. Ambassador Kennedy would also be seeing Stowe in London.

Assuming confirmation of the British position we would work to get them out of talks on the discussion proposals and into wider talks with us. Mr. Hume said we should base our language, in seeking this widening of discussion, on the more open statements already to be found in the recent White Paper. The Taoiseach pointed out that in the relevant portion of the White Paper (para. 14-22) there was no reference to the political parties in Northern Ireland. Was this deliberate? Mr. Hume said that in his recent contacts he had drawn the absence of such a reference to attention. The Taoiseach recommended that the first sentence in paragraph 21 of the White Paper should now be brought up with the British. (The sentence reads "In the words of the communiqué issued after the meeting on 21 May between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, there is a unique relationship between the peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and a need to further this relationship in the interests of peace and reconciliation"). The Minister remarked that this raised the possibility of parallel talks, such as Mr. Hume had referred to earlier.

The Taoiseach said that the inclusion of this material and also the reference to the legitimate aspiration to Irish unity were no doubt the work of our Foreign Office friends.

Mr. Currie said we should use bits from the document to build a bridge to the new position we sought which would involve the Government in talks with London on political progress in Northern Ireland. He expressed the view that Mrs. Thatcher must be fed up with the unionists. We should point out that the effect of the constitutional guarantee was that unionists were allowed to extend the guarantee to include a veto on any thing they disagree with. The major problem was to get movement into the situation. In this connection The Taoiseach referred to the raising of the Protestant Monarchy issue by Orange spokesman. Mallon and Currie agreed that this was just the sort of action to be expected from unionists who felt themselves immune from any consequences because of the guarantee. They also observed that the affair had shown the unacceptable sectarian face of the great

liberal British democracy. The Taoiseach noted that Mrs. Thatcher had not hesitated to say that her Government had no plans to change the Act of settlement. Hume said she could not have said anything else and remarked that Paisley had once said to him (Hume) that he would be loyal to the Crown so long as the Crown is Protestant but not thereafter.

In a long intervention Séamus Mallon gave his analysis. The Taoiseach in his meeting with Mrs. Thatcher had drawn the British Government from the position which the SDLP knew they held on 1 May last. They had kept revising their proposals before publication of the recent discussion paper. Nevertheless the reaction of the unionists had shown that there was at present no way of reaching political agreement in Northern Ireland. The dialogue which London had conducted in various talks had shown that they could not solve the problem on their own. In this situation hard talking by the Government to London would be needed. He had exchanged views with members of the Tory Party in London and had pointed out that the recent paper had no provision for Irish Government involvement in a Northern settlement but the unionists had still turned it down. The paper had contained an option for majority rule in Northern Ireland but it still had been turned down. There could be no solution within the Northern Ireland context and this had been agreed by Alistair Cooke. We must now get the British Government on to that tack. Mallon pointed out that the credibility in Northern Ireland of the SDLP suffered every time the party was involved in a discussion process which led nowhere.

The Taoiseach agreed that nobody could afford another failure. The democratic process suffered with every failure. The SDLP was in the business of furthering the democratic process therefore they had to become involved. Mallon said that we should move the process to a quadripartite frame work and to a higher plane. The Taoiseach said that the Government had been pressing for this and that a compelling argument was that the British authorities could not go on expecting the SDLP to accept humiliation through its involvement in failed British initiatives. Mallon remarked that if the SDLP were now given power-sharing in an exclusively Northern Ireland context they could not take it. Currie asked how could they serve with Paisley

The Taoiseach suggested that both the Government and the SDLP should pursue with the British the line that another failed initiative was now on our hands. The hypothesis mentioned in paragraph 64 of the White Paper had come about. We should consider how to reply to the British if they were to admit failure and to ask what we proposed. Was the SDLP studying any position? We should consider the problem together secretly in a joint group. We should not put forward any conclusions too early.

Mr. Hume agreed we should collaborate to pursue possible positions but not announce them before time as the possible positions would then become a target for the other side. The Minister said that no proposals should be put forward until a conference was set up. Mr. Canavan said we should make it clear to everybody that the British document is finished. A formula must now be elaborated covering agreement on the three dimensions and on the responsibility and tasks of the conference we wanted. The two Governments should then be prepared to act.

The Taoiseach suggested that we might say to the British that they had carried the odium of failure for long enough. We would take a share of the responsibility for solving the problem. Mr. Canavan said that cooperation between the two Governments should continue for instance in the face of unionist violence if any should arise. The Minister said we had the prospect of getting into a new guarantee situation.

Dr. Hendron expressed the view that there are some moderate unionists who might be tempted into supporting the quadripartite conference. He had spoken recently to Captain Ardill, the Whip of UUUC, who had said that he would go into some sort of all round negotiations about the North's future. However such moderate unionists were afraid of Paisleyite extremists.

Discriminatory treatment continues. There are 100,000 nationalists in West Belfast who had been barricaded into their area on 12 July. Resentment at such treatment was bitter. Unemployment was up to 40%. Harrassment was general and large numbers of these people had been to Castlereagh for police

questioning. It was impossible to sell the White Paper to such people. Dr. Hendron felt that some unionists might move forward in their thinking if the constitutional guarantee were modified as the Government had demanded.

Arising out of this presentation the Taoiseach said that he resented it when the Irish Times and others spoke of the Orange tradition as though it were a folklore phenomenon. We must remember that the marches were triumphalist Croppies-lie-down affairs. It was because of the understandable feelings of nationalists in the North that he had been worried about the acceptability of the sort of speech conciliatory to unionists which he had in mind. There was some further comment from Currie, Mallon and Hendron about the paranoid psychology of the unionists and about the exceptionally bitter Orange speeches this year. These matters should be brought to the attention of the British (and it was commented that the media consistently failed to report extremist unionist declarations in main-land Britain).

Further discussion of possible British moves followed. Mallon considered that since Mrs. Thatcher's repetition of the guarantee to unionists had not prevented her proposals from ending in failure there was no risk in her reconsidering that guarantee. As regards what devolution proposals the British Government might now consider, Hume pointed out the Airey Neave idea seemed to have been ruled out in the White Paper. When Mallon quoted Atkins's desire, expressed in the Commons on 2 July, to improve direct rule, the Taoiseach pointed out that the British and Atkins in particular did not want direct rule. He had often said how odd he found it as an Englishman to be in charge in Northern Ireland. Mr Currie said that if it were left to the British to end direct rule we would all be led along their road and the SDLP would lose further credibility. We must have our own initiative and, by selectively using the language of the recent British White Paper we could raise it from the ashes of that old initiative. He agreed that we should avoid attacks on the Orange tradition.

Summing up, the Taoiseach said that we should get in with some ideas now. In using the White Paper we should bear in mind that paragraph 64 is a danger too. We should work on proposals to have ready for a conference. It would be easy for the Government to arrange a Working Party for this purpose. Could the SDLP nominate participants? We should arrange a meeting shortly. The work should be confidential and we should prepare for unexpected questions from the British or from journalists. In that case the SDLP participants could explain their journey to Dublin by saying that they were members of a "Committee on Cross-Border Co-operation". This line of approach was agreed.

The joint statement for release to the press (annexed) was then agreed.

The Taoiseach then inquired whether the SDLP representatives wished to say anything about the behaviour of the British forces recently. Mr. Canavan described the activities of loyalist terrorists in recent months. At least twenty murders had been committed by them this year. The SDLP were calling on the British authorities to identify the loyalist tradition as a source of terrorism. There was also disquiet about the police. It would always be so so long as there was political disturbance and so long as the emergency act remained. Criticism of the behaviour of the troops was still justified and the Party had exposed some matters with the help of the Government. Pressure should be maintained to make sure that soldiers are put in the dock. Mr. Canavan thought that the fact that there had been no more deaths since November 1978 as a result of the SAS "kill don't question" approach was due to the joint efforts of the SDLP and the Government. The SDLP combatted these abuses at all levels and he felt that most of the political time of SDLP members was spent in dealing with the problem. The Taoiseach inquired whether they should not submit a document to the British about these difficulties.

Hume and Mallon confirmed the renaissance of loyalist murder gangs and Mallon gave direct information from high-level RUC sources of the existence of a political murder list. He knew that the murders of John Turnley and Miriam Daly were not isolated. The murderers were members of the UDA. Currie said that although Tyrie and Barr had disclaimed any responsibility it was clear that the UDA lay behind the recent killings. He repeated that the emergency powers were not been used in loyalist areas. The priority of the security forces was to deal with the IRA and other offenders got off by default. We must try to get action even-handedly. There was active political incitement in Fermanagh towards loyalist violence and fears in County Fermanagh were at a high point on both sides. As regards this area both Hume and Currie referred to the exceptionally intense and bitter rivalry between the OUP and the DUP and felt that the OUP might even come under the SDLP banner in the next local election. The meeting agreed on the very worrying position about sectarian murders and it was decided that material for presenting a case from Dublin to the British authorities should be prepared.

In further comment Dr. Hendron pointed out that no police officers had been convicted for offences committed in Castlereagh and only two had been brought to trial. Mr. Mallon referred to the H-Block protest which continued to be a canker in the body politic. While the H-Block protest remained political progress would be very difficult and some way around the problem should be sought which would enable the British to avoid losing face.

The Taoiseach said the Government had repeatedly drawn attention to ways around the H. Block problem.

The Minister said he had told Atkins in detail how we managed matters in our jails.

The Taoiseach said that another urgent question was that of Martin Meehan the hunger striker. His Legal Adviser and his family said he would soon die. This was a matter for great concern as his death would set Belfast alight.

The Taoiseach said he should be brought to trial immediately. It would be a total disaster if he died. His appeal should be brought on at once as it would not wait until September. He recognised that the judiciary would be on holiday through the summer but we should press for exceptional action.

In conclusion the SDLP representatives expressed their sympathy over the death of the two gárdaí murdered in Roscommon.

Department of Foreign Affairs

TEXT OF STATEMENT ISSUED AFTER YESTERDAY'S MEETING WITH SDLP IS
AS FOLLOWS :

THE TAOISEACH, MR. CHARLES J. HAUGHEY AND THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MR. BRIAN LENIHAN, T.D., MET A DELEGATION FROM THE S.D.L.P. IN DUBLIN TODAY. THE S.D.L.P. WERE REPRESENTED BY MR. JOHN HUME, MEP, LEADER OF THE PARTY, MR. SEAMUS MALLON, DEPUTY LEADER, MR. AUSTIN CURRIE, CONSTITUENCY REPRESENTATIVE AND LIAISON OFFICER FOR THE PARTY WITH DUBLIN, DR. JOE HENDRON, PARTY SPOKESMAN ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, AND MR. MICHAEL CANAVAN, SPOKESMAN ON SECURITY.

THE MEETING WAS ONE OF A SERIES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE S.D.L.P. FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN REGARD TO NORTHERN IRELAND.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON NORTHERN IRELAND WAS DISCUSSED AND THERE WAS FULL AGREEMENT ON THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO SECURING A JUST AND LASTING SETTLEMENT.

AGREEMENT WAS EXPRESSED ON THE NEED TO HAVE THE WHOLE SITUATION RAISED TO A NEW INTER-GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL AND CONSIDERED IN THE CONTEXT OF CLOSER POLITICAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS, WITH APPROPRIATE INVOLVEMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL LEADERS.

IT WAS AGREED THAT ANY DEFINITIVE SETTLEMENT SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT RELATIONS BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH IN IRELAND, BETWEEN IRELAND AND BRITAIN, AND BETWEEN BOTH PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

IT WAS ALSO AGREED THAT THE WAY WOULD BE OPENED TOWARDS POLITICAL PROGRESS IF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WERE TO DECLARE THEIR INTEREST IN IRISH UNITY, BY CONSENT, AND IN PEACE, AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS FOR ACHIEVING IT.

END OF MESSAGE
SENT 1023/18TH
F-A1 LDN
E-A DUBLIN