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SECRET



*Mr Mc Donagh  
12/9/90*

*Tadsearch  
To see please*

*Mr Condon  
15.5.7.90  
VZ*

Discussion with John Hume,  
8th September, 1990

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Hume-Adams Talks

1. At Adams' initiative, Hume met the Sinn Fein leader privately on Friday last. Adams had seen the texts of the Hume address to the Merriman Summer School and had been pleased at Hume's remark that he did not "dismiss" the Provisional IRA "as mindless, as criminals, as gangsters" but - and while disagreeing forcefully with their methods - accepted that they "actually believe in what they are doing".
2. Hume told Adams that, responding to the assertion in his Merriman speech that the reasons for the Provo campaign are now out of date, Ambassador Fenn had written to him (Annex 1) and had agreed that it was nonsense to suppose that the British presence in Northern Ireland is due to the defence of economic or strategic interests". Fenn in particular drew attention to paragraphs 21-23 (Annex 2) of his own address to the MacGill Summer School where, inter alia, he argued that the British "have no preconceived blueprint" for the "ultimate destiny" of the North - there was "no secret strategic or economic motivation". (The text went on to say that "whatever view one takes of the past, the present reality is not sensibly seen as a residual colonial problem. To a British diplomat, proud of the way in which, in my lifetime, we have divested ourselves with reasonably good grace of the greatest empire the world has ever known, it seems absurd to see the problem in such terms").
3. Hume made the point that the language in Fenn's speech was in response to his repeated requests to the British to say publicly that they had now no longer any economic or strategic vested interest in remaining in Ireland, and to

his view that this would have a positive impact on the on-going dialogue within the Provos. Hume added that Fenn had informed him that the specific language used in the paragraphs in question had been authorised by the Secretary of State. Hume also gave Adams the (probably misleading) impression that, but for the murder of Ian Gow, Brooke would have found an opportunity to deliver a text along these lines himself. (In relation to the Gow death, Adams rather oddly said that he was worried that "they will kill Thatcher").

#### Adams Request for Private Paper

4. In the course of a long discussion with Adams, Hume argued in favour of an alternative approach by the Provos - specifically that they would lay down their arms in return for a request from the SDLP to the Government to call a Conference of all parties (including Sinn Fein) on the island; presuming the Unionists would not attend, this Conference would become a forum where all the nationalist parties would work out a common plan/strategy on the basis of which they would seek to convince Unionists of the value of a united Ireland. Hume said Adams seemed interested in considering this approach and asked, in pursuit of it, that Hume let him have a private paper along these lines which he would then put to the IRA. Hume intends working on a paper this week which he will pass to us before deciding whether to take the matter further.

#### Brooke Initiative

5. Hume expressed himself as being unhappy with Brooke's Ballymena speech and, in particular, with what he saw as too narrow a focus on the establishment of internal arrangements for the North. He believes that his own dialogue with the Provos probably offers a better prospect

of a long-term solution being brought about.

6. He also mentioned that Adams left him with the strong impression that he was genuinely worried that, if by any chance the present initiative succeeded and new arrangements were to be underpinned by joint North-South referenda, as Hume has suggested, this could undermine Provo legitimacy and credibility. However, Adams felt overall that the talks were unlikely to lead anywhere.

#### Joint Declaration by the two Governments

7. As will be noted from the final paragraph of his letter, Fenn has drawn the attention of the FCO and the NIO to the suggestion by Hume in his Merriman speech that the British and Irish Governments should consider making a joint declaration (modelled on EEC language) which would propose, inter alia, the building of "institutions in Ireland North and South which will respect differences but which will allow the people in both parts of Ireland to work their common ground together and . . . . to grow together, like the Europeans, at our own speed". This could be interpreted as meaning that both Governments had declared publicly that they believed ultimately in a united Ireland and were working towards it.

#### Provos in Derry

8. Hume mentioned to me that he had heard from a reliable source close to the Provo leadership in Derry that they were considering declaring the city a "violence free" area. His own view is that this could be a trap - the Provos are under increasing pressure in Derry through the growth of confidence in, and the economic regeneration of, the city and may be looking for justification to develop their (recently very limited) campaign there. Hume's fear is

that, if the British army remained on the streets after a Provo "violence free" declaration, this could be used by the Provos to put the blame on the British for any new IRA actions. For this reason, Hume will advise the British to be ready to respond positively and sensitively to any Provo declaration along these lines.

Comment on new development in Adams/Hume talks

9. It is difficult to judge how much political weight to attach to the Adams' request for a private paper from Hume. There is no doubt that Hume tends at times to be over optimistic in his assessment and to lack a sense of perspective about developments in which he has been involved. Additionally, one would have to be conscious of any implications for the Brooke initiative (including the risk that - if we were to go down the road suggested by Hume - the prospect of drawing Unionists into dialogue might be endangered).
10. Nevertheless, the Adams' request comes at a time when we have had consistent signals from reliable sources in the North (including Bishop Cathal Daly, Fr. Wallace in West Belfast and the Catholic and Church of Ireland Chaplains at the Maze) that the Provos are beginning to look fundamentally at the continuation of their campaign of violence and the prospects for opting into the political process. When I saw him in late July, Bishop Daly said that, while he recognised the "immense moral dilemma" of any contact with Sinn Fein and the IRA, it would be regrettable if the present feelers from this quarter were left unanswered.
11. At the least, there would seem to be no reason why the paper Hume is drafting should not be looked at seriously and, together with him, the potential of the development assessed. It would, of course, be an immensely significant

step if the Provos were to consider that their aspirations and objectives could be accommodated through the changing political process - change which is being brought about by, inter alia, the signals of "neutrality" on the North's future emerging from London (e.g. in the Fenn speech to MacGill), the levelling of the North's political playing pitch through the role of the Government in representing nationalists via the Anglo-Irish process and by the wider development towards political and economic unity within the European Community.

*PST*

Dermot Gallagher,  
10 September, 1990.

cc: PST; PSM; Mr. Nally; PSS; Ms. Anderson.

From: Sir Nicholas Fenn KCMG, HM Ambassador

ANNEX 1BRITISH EMBASSY,  
DUBLIN.

28 August 1990

John Hume Esq MP MEP  
5 Bayview Terrace  
LONDONDERRY*Dear John,*

It was good to see you again at Lahinch last week and to witness in person the important speech which you delivered to the Merriman Summer School. As I explained at the time, I do not agree with every word in it. (In particular the changes to which you referred are not in my view due "entirely" to developments in the European Community). But I welcome and applaud the trenchant arguments you addressed to the IRA and endorse your view that - whatever may have been the case in the past - it is nonsense to suppose that the British presence in Northern Ireland is due to the defence of economic or strategic interests.

As I promised, I venture to enclose a copy of the speech I contributed to the MacGill Summer School at Glenties on 15 August. The immediately relevant passage is "the underlying reality" at paragraphs 21-23. But you might find some interest in the second half of the speech beginning at paragraph 14.

I have lost no time in reporting your speech to the FCO and the NIO, drawing their attention not only to your appeal to the IRA to lay down their arms but also to your suggestion for a joint declaration by the two Governments. As I warned you, Mr Brooke is away this week and part of next but I have told his office to expect a call from you.

*Yours sincerely,*

Nicholas Fenn



E. UNDERLYING REALITY

21. There are two underlying political realities:

a. The first is that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom in British and International Law, and will remain so unless and until a majority of its people decide otherwise.

b. The second is that, whatever emerges from present uncertainties, there can be no return to the dictatorship of the majority which for fifty years was called democracy. Neither community in Northern Ireland can impose its will on the other.

22. The British Government have views of their own about Northern Ireland. But they have no preconceived blueprint for its ultimate destiny. There is no secret strategic or economic motivation. Whatever view one takes of the past, the present reality is not sensibly seen as a residual colonial problem. To a British diplomat, proud of the way in which, in my lifetime, we have divested ourselves with reasonably good grace of the greatest empire the world has ever known, it seems absurd to see the problem in such terms. The issue is not something called "the British presence in the north of Ireland". We are not talking about real estate, but about people: one million Irishmen profoundly alienated from the Republic and determined to be British. A secure future cannot be built upon fantasy. Northern Ireland remains British because that is the declared and continuing desire of a majority of its people. They will not be betrayed.



23. Article 1 of the Agreement commits both governments to a crucial formula: the principle of consent: the two Governments affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of

Northern Ireland". As Mr Tom King used to observe, this means self-determination for the people of Northern Ireland.