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**Reference Code:** 2021/99/3

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**To:** Mr. Paddy Teahon  
**From:** Secretary Dermot Gallagher  
**Date:** 10 December 1997  
**Pages:** 1 + 5

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**Washington Report**

-- Hume's meeting with President Clinton

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9 December 1997

Mr Dermot Gallagher  
 Second Secretary  
 Department of Foreign Affairs

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 ✓ PSM, DBMS, PSSG:  
 Messrs. Murray, Tahan,  
 Mansergh & Dalton;  
 Ambassadors London &  
 Washington; Joint Secretary;  
 Counsellors A-1

Dear Dermot

As reported by telephone, John Hume met yesterday with the President at the White House. The President was joined by National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and his team. Mr Hume returned to the White House later in the day for a further session with Berger and his colleagues. Ambassador Kennedy-Smith was also present.

Mr Hume found the President to be well-briefed and deeply interested in the progress of the peace process, so much so that their conversation considerably over-ran the allotted time. The President referred specifically to next week's meeting with the Taoiseach, and said that he would be ready to do anything which the Taoiseach thought helpful to the process.

Reflecting a suggestion put to him earlier at breakfast by Senator Kennedy, the SDLP leader congratulated the President for his initiative on race, and suggested that its underlying theme of respect for diversity reflected precisely the purpose of the all-party Talks. He felt this point was well taken by the President.

The opportunity was also taken to thank the President for US support for the confidence agenda, a topic which Mr Hume again stressed in his later meeting with Sandy Berger. There was also some discussion of the importance of the US contribution in the economic sphere. Mr Hume also conveyed an invitation to the President to address the European Parliament.

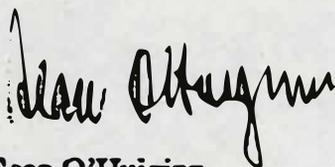
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Mr Hume also used the meeting with Berger to sketch out his concept of what a new institutional framework, based on the European model, might look like. Some of his interlocutors were reminded of the Bosnian analogy, and were interested in his view as to why it might be more successful in a Northern Ireland context. I understand his presentation on confidence-building issues at this latter meeting was particularly cogent.

The earlier meeting with Senator Kennedy focused mainly on plans for the Senator's visit to Derry next month. As you know, the Senator will deliver a lecture at Magee College on 9 January, and has also agreed to be Mr Hume's guest at a private dinner that evening.

Other elements in Mr Hume's programme include a reception which I hosted at the Residence last evening - he had an opportunity to meet Secretary Riley, and a number of members of Congress who stopped over on their way to a White House Christmas function - and a lunch meeting today with a cross-section of the Washington media. He himself was characteristically up-beat on the impact of his visit on the White house, and very appreciative of the comments made on it by Mike McCurry (see attached).

Yours sincerely



Sean O'Huiginn  
Ambassador

Encls

• The Associated Press

y LAWRENCE L. KNUTSON

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - The leader of Northern Ireland's largest Catholic political party met with President Clinton on Monday and said he was encouraged that the British province's feuding factions will make progress at settling the issues that divide them.

John Hume, head of the Social Democratic and Labor Party, the moderate rival of Sinn Fein for Roman Catholic votes, called the economic aid package Clinton has promoted at the White House "a crucial factor ... in building trust among both sections of our community and helping us in the more difficult political front."

White House press secretary Mike McCurry called Hume a "courageous voice for peace" in Northern Ireland. He said his meeting with Clinton occurred at a moment of encouragement and hope for progress in all-party talks.

"We look forward to further progress by the parties as they address issues that are relevant to the Northern Ireland peace process in the coming year," McCurry said.

Standing in front of the West Wing of the White House, Hume credited Clinton for active, consistent encouragement of the peace process.

"Our hope now is that the peace process is getting down to the serious issues, that we'll start making extensive progress in the near future," he said.

He said he was encouraged the government of British Prime Minister Tony Blair has responded to the success of the current cease-fire by beginning the withdrawal of armed troops from the streets.

"The reason soldiers are on the streets ... is that there has been violence on the streets," he said. "If violence stops on the streets, one would expect that it would remove soldiers from the streets as well. And that's what is happening."

"I want to see a society in which there's no armed soldiers of any description...and the sooner that happens the better," he said.

Hume acknowledged that there are "splinter groups" that would like to destroy the peace process.

"And that should strengthen the will of everybody involved in the peace

process to make sure that people like that do not succeed," he said.

"I know that is the will of the vast majority of our people because peace on the streets of Northern Ireland has transformed our atmosphere," he said.

"Imagine you're a young person under 30 in Northern Ireland," Hume said.

"For the first time in your life you have normality on the streets. And that has ... strengthened all of the political parties in their attempts to achieve lasting peace and lasting stability."

AP-NY-12-08-97 1319EST

WASHINGTON, Dec 8 (Reuters) - President Bill Clinton was encouraged by peace talks in Northern Ireland and looked forward to seeing further progress, the White House said on Monday.

Clinton expressed his optimism at a meeting with Catholic nationalist leader John Hume. U.S. officials said the discussions lasted about 15 minutes and National security advisor Sandy Berger also took part. Hume is leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party.

"This meeting comes at a moment in which we are encouraged by discussions that have been held, and we look forward to further progress by the parties to address issues that are relevant to the Northern Ireland peace process," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said.

After the meeting, Hume said he hoped the talks were nearing the point where substantial progress could be made. "Our hope now is that the talks process is getting down to the serious issues and that we will start making substantial progress in the near future," Hume said.

The talks, which began in Belfast in September after a cease-fire in July by the Irish Republican Army, were attended on Monday by Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern.

Ahern said he was in Belfast to meet Protestants and Catholics and encourage the parties involved in negotiations to end almost three decades of violence in which more than 3,000 people have died.

But the weekend killing of a Catholic nationalist by suspected pro-British Protestant militants cast a pall over the talks, which last week began to show some signs of progress.

Ahern's visit, his first to the talks, is part of an initiative to keep up momentum toward an agreement.

He and British Prime Minister Tony Blair have spearheaded a fresh peace drive in Northern Ireland since each came to power in elections six months ago.  
^REUTERS@

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