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SECRET

27 February 1986

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Taoiseach
TANAISTE
Min Justice
MR. NALLY
MR. WARD

John Hume's meeting with Mrs Thatcher

Dear Assistant Secretary

John Hume gave me a short briefing of his meeting with Mrs Thatcher this afternoon as follows:

1. He was unaccompanied but she was accompanied by Tom King and her PPS Michael Alison MP. The meeting was in the PM's room in the House of Commons and lasted from 4.15 to 5.15 ^{pm} approx.
2. Mrs Thatcher's major objective from the meeting seemed to be to secure as positive a statement as possible. She seemed satisfied enough with the attached statement, especially the reference to sympathy for the relatives of members of the security forces.
3. She began by putting all the points to him that were made by Unionists in relation to the Agreement and in relation to the SDLP position on the security forces and the Assembly. Hume offered to repeat his support for the upholding of the law impartially. King countered that this was not new but Hume asked what was wrong with impartiality? Mrs Thatcher agreed that the law must be enforced evenhandedly. The question of attending RUC funerals was not raised although King wanted a sentence from Hume praising the RUC.
4. Mrs Thatcher asked him to confirm he would attend round table talks. She thought devolution would be difficult to achieve but wants to get the parties talking. Hume said he would participate and underlined his sincerity by asking for a date. She did not come back with a date.
5. Mrs Thatcher asked if he would enter a newly-elected Assembly before there was agreement on power sharing. Hume said that to hold elections before agreement would be to lose the major pressure point on Unionists to agree to powersharing. She asked how many were affected and he replied there were 60 Unionists whose livelihood would be affected if the Assembly ended.
6. She said she was surprised by the breakdown of her understanding with Molyneux and Paisley. She had not expected that they would allow themselves to be browbeaten.

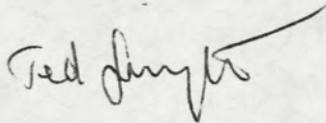
7. Hume thought the mood of the meeting quite constructive and that it had been usefully prepared by the Taoiseach's response to Mrs Thatcher and by the meeting that Ambassador Dorr and Richard Ryan had with the Chief Whip, John Wakeham, on Tuesday night. When Hume met Wakeham later that night he seemed more understanding of the SDLP position than heretofore. In this context it may be worth mentioning that in the lobby briefing this morning I am told that Bernard Ingham indicated that Thatcher would be putting it up to Hume on the security forces and on talks. I expect the statement will now be sold by Ingham as a new development.

8. Finally, Mrs Thatcher assured Hume: "Don't be under any illusion, we'll be resolute about implementing the Agreement".

Indeed in the House earlier Mrs Thatcher had during PM Question Time said she thought that a strike on Monday "would lead to the erosion of support for Unionism in the United Kingdom".

Hume returns to Derry around lunchtime Friday *and speaks in Ballymena tonight.*

Yours sincerely



Ted Smyth

Mr Eamon O'Tuathail
Assistant Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin

The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland held a meeting this afternoon with Mr John Hume, M.P., leader of the Social Democrat and Labour Party.

The Prime Minister confirmed the Government's commitment to implement the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr Hume reaffirmed the SDLP's willingness to enter into discussions on devolution at any time without preconditions. Mr Hume recognised that, ^{in accordance with the Anglo-Irish} ~~in accordance with the Anglo-Irish~~ Agreement, if arrangements for devolution acceptable to both communities were achieved, the subjects which would become the responsibility of the devolved body would cease to be within the purview of the Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr Hume confirmed that the SDLP fully support the Security Forces in Northern Ireland in carrying out their duty of upholding the law impartially. The SDLP totally and utterly reject violence and all those who were involved in it or in support of it. They made clear their sympathy for the relatives of all those members of the Security forces who had been killed or wounded by terrorists, and indeed for all innocent victims of terrorism.

The Prime Minister will be seeing other political leaders in Northern Ireland in the near future to discuss among other things devolution and will thereafter have further contacts with Mr Hume.

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