



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Interview with John Hume, P.M. Ulster, Radio Ulster, 11 January 1988.

Interviewer: Now to those talks between Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams and the leader of the SDLP, John Hume. A statement, as you know, as you heard on the news bulletin was issued by SDLP Headquarters a short time ago. It said that both men had been invited by a third party to meet and create what was described as greater political dialogue. Only the two party leaders were present at the meeting. It was said that both men covered a very wide range of issues and John Hume is on the line right now. Mr. Hume, what were you talking about and who initiated the talks?

John Hume: Well, the talks were initiated, as the statement says, by a third party, and I have no wish to add to what that statement says, other than to say that I, on behalf of the SDLP, made clear repeatedly we were willing to enter into dialogue with anyone if it can make a contribution to peace and stability and when approached by the third party about these particular talks, I felt it was my responsibility to explore any avenue. Politics is about dialogue; I hope that this particular dialogue will be productive but I wouldn't want to raise expectations, nor do I wish to add further to the statement that we have issued.

Interviewer: I wonder how that squares with the comments made by Mr. Eddie McGrady, you remember, following Enniskillen, when it was said that there would be no cooperation with the men or women who espoused violence. Now that many people might feel, hardly matches up.

John Hume: I don't see how what you have just said to me squares with what I am saying to you. I am not talking, the fact that we enter into dialogue with other political parties doesn't mean that we cooperate with them about anything. It means that we enter into dialogue and the statement says we stated our respective positions, we are reporting back to our parties and if we think after that that further dialogue could be

- 2 -

productive, we will engage in it. As I say, politics is about dialogue; I hope it will be productive. Everybody can guess the sort of productivity that I would be looking for out of such dialogue because our position is very clear, but I don't think it's helpful to the process of dialogue that we engaged in today to add to the statement that we have issued.

Interviewer: You might well anticipate that unionists will be furious about this and, to answer that, maybe, who knows it might wreck whatever slim possibility there might be of talking with them or coming to some sort of an agreement.

John Hume: Well, I won't anticipate what unionists will say about today's dialogue but I will respond to it if and when they do say anything.

Interviewer: Can you give us any indication at all of the nature of what you were talking about?

John Hume: There is a statement issued and I have no wish to add to that statement, David. As I say, I believe that we here in the business of politics are in the business of dialogue, we should explore any avenue and I think that in this community at the present time, church leaders of all descriptions have been calling for dialogue; we engaged in dialogue today, perhaps the most difficult dialogue of all. I am willing to talk to anyone. In the past I have talked to all shades of opinion in this community on all sides of it, for the same reasons, and I will continue to do so.

Interview with Gerry Adams, "Good Morning Ulster", Radio Ulster, 12.1.88

Adams: I was approached by a third party with the suggestion that John Hume and I should have a meeting and I consider that dialogue of the type we had today should be normal practice for political parties and especially for political leaders and publicly for any number of times in the past I have stated that view, so I was glad to take the opportunity to have such dialogue.

Interviewer: The talks have been described as productive. Productive in what way?

Adams: Well, we said they were a valuable exchange. We were able to, as our statement has said, consider a number of issues, to put each of us our respective view on those issues and to consider each other's view. And I think that in terms of just breaking the silence, of starting a debate and of having that exchange, that it was useful and good.

Interviewer: Is there any chance that these talks may lead to the IRA calling off their campaign of violence?

Adams: Well that wasn't an issue. I mean, they were political discussions, there wasn't any military agenda or any such type of discussion today. Mr. Hume certainly put the SDLP's opposition to the armed struggle. From that point of view, as a first initial exchange of views, of listening the SDLP analysis and including the republican analysis, it was the start of a process which I wouldn't raise expectations about, which I think was useful for Mr. Hume and it was certainly useful for me.

Interviewer: But surely ending the IRA campaign of violence and terrorism must be one of the crunch questions facing Northern Ireland?

Adams: No, well I think that probably may be one of the crunch questions which the British and pro-establishment politicians have but I think that any serious politician must have as his or her primary objective the

- 2 -

bringing about of conditions of equality, of peace and of justice. An end of violence in this state doesn't mean merely the IRA surrendering. It means conditions in which peace can be built and nurtured. That's what I'm interested in.

Interviewer: You admitted that Enniskillen badly damaged Sinn Fein and the IRA. By agreeing to take part in these talks, were you in a sense trying to limit that damage?

Adams: No, not at all, I would have talked and will talk to any political party, to anyone who has some view to put, at any time and certainly the terrible tragedy of Enniskillen was totally coincidental in the sequence of events which led to today's discussions.

Interviewer: What do you think today's talks achieved?

Adams: Mr. Hume and I represent the non-unionist political population of this state. It should always have been normal practice that we would have dialogue, so what today represented was, and it's only unique because of the type of place we live in, what today represented was the type of dialogue which we should have been engaged in long since.

Interviewer: Was there any common ground?

Adams: Yes, the very fact it was agreed, having listened to each other's views, to report back to our parties shows that we are both interested in finding and discovering with our respective parties if there is any further room for dialogue.

Interview with John Hume, "Good Morning Ulster", Radio Ulster, 12.1.88

Interviewer: Earlier in the programme we heard Gerry Adams saying that a call for an end to the IRA campaign of violence was, quote, not an issue, at yesterday's talks. Is that correct?

Hume: Well, what yesterday's talks were about was about peace and about bringing violence to an end and that was made very very clear by me to Mr. Adams.

Interviewer: Did you call for an end to the IRA's campaign of violence?

Mr. Hume: Of course I did and not only did I call for an end to it but I gave reasons why I thought that the campaign was utterly counterproductive even from their own point of view.

Interviewer: So does Gerry Adams accept, in your view, that that is a call and an issue to be tackled?

Mr. Hume: I didn't hear what Mr. Adams said this morning but I am quite clear in my own mind what our talks were about. They were about how we achieve peace in this community which means how we achieve an end to violence.

Interviewer: Presumably you have heard some of the reactions to the news of the talks which would tend to prove there was no short-term gain for you. Did you have a longer term objective then in setting up the talks?

Mr. Hume: Well if I could deal with the reaction, I mean, I do think it is rather pathetic. We first of all have the the Workers Party who having privatised their paramilitary wing seem to think they can give lectures from on high to other people. I don't think they have any credibility in talking about this issue. The Alliance Party, on the other hand, say that this makes nonsense of our vote of no confidence from Sinn Fein in Fermanagh. Are they seriously saying that if they talk to someone say, for

- 2 -

example they talk to the DUP that that changes their attitudes to what the DUP stands for? And as for Mr. Molyneaux, his response was quite pathetic, because you know it's not so long since himself and Mr. Paisley and Members of Parliament of both parties marched at a paramilitary funeral. It is not so long since they marched in the streets with paramilitaries, the same paramilitary organisation whose guns were found in such a substantial number of them recently. It is not out of our memory that they sat round the table, their party sat round the table with that same paramilitary organisation, to cooperate to achieve political objectives. So I think that there is a great deal of, you know, and if Mr. Molyneaux was to go tomorrow to talk to the UDA, and to say to them, to talk to them about ending violence, do you think that I would be criticising him? And further, in reference to what he says, damage done to his talks with Mr. King I would presume and I'm afraid I may be naive in this, that both Mr. Molyneaux and Mr. Paisley were talking to Mr. King about proposals for a solution to this problem and if that's what they're talking about, and that's what I would expect and that's what I think the community would be expecting them to talk about, that should not be changed because somebody else goes and talks to somebody else. And could I say to Mr. Molyneaux and to the unionists that if I were talking to them, the strategy of peace that I would be proposing to them would be no different than the strategy for peace that I was proposing to Gerry Adams yesterday, no different at all; and the role of the unionist people and the need for their agreement to that strategy of peace would be no different either.

Interviewer: Two months ago, on the day of the Enniskillen atrocity, you described the bomb as the worst ever provocation against the Protestant community. Would you accept that from the Protestant point of view that it was provocative to talk to Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein?

Mr. Hume: No I don't think that. I think that the politicians reaction yesterday was kneejerk and I think it's typical of the bankruptcy of their political ideas. All they are interested in is trading the usual abuse across the divide. What I am interested in is trying to heal that divide and to face up to all the realities that you have to face up to if you're going to heal it. I am approached by a third party who tells me, a third party that I respect, that he believes that it would be very very productive if I were to talk to Mr. Adams and what he meant by productive, and he spelt

- 3 -

out what he meant by productive, about bringing peace to this society. Now I am a political leader, I have talked in the past and my party has talked in the past to all sections of this community. In the past twelve months representatives of my party have talked to the UDA about finding a way forward that accommodates everybody. Is somebody telling me in all seriousness that I should not accept or probe the opportunity and, as I said immediately after the meeting, I hope that it will lead where I want it to lead, which is to peace, but I don't want to raise people's expectations. And could somebody also tell me in a society, where the man I talked to was actually an elected representative, how in any way that talking to people we talk about the post... there has been a lot of talk about the post-Enniskillen mood and that mood, if people don't mind me saying so I think what was different about Enniskillen and the other atrocities that had been committed in Northern Ireland was that the victims spoke and they spoke through Mr. Gordon Wilson and that man moved the world and he moved the world by a sense of Christian forgiveness that this society or any other society has rarely seen and he talked about praying for the people who killed his daughter. Are people really objecting now that I should talk to the political and public figure who has most influence over those people. Are people really objecting to that?

Interviewer: Your talks yesterday have been called valuable. Could you define what valuable means?

Mr. Hume: I'll define it in terms of the objective that the talks are out to seek; they are out to seek peace in this society. In that regard, as the statement also said, each side at the talks put their analysis of the present situation. To do that face to face and to have a full and complete understanding of what other people are about is something every politician should have in this society. I think, and I would admit this, I read very carefully what most other politicians say but even I find that in talking face to face I see nuances and openings that I didn't see before and I found the exchange yesterday valuable from that point of view and I am hoping to develop the opportunities that I saw in those talks yesterday to bring about peace. I may fail but tell me if I do, what difference; if I succeed the price which is the sort of criticism that I've heard this morning which was, by the way, predictable and kneejerk, will be a very small price to pay and the people out there listening to me will agree with me.