

Dermot Nally Papers

UCDA P254/70

SECRET

Meeting with Mr. John Hume

Barrack,
Do see please — last
Sentence in part 8 in
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1. I had a meeting with Mr. John Hume in the margin of the SDLP Conference on Saturday, 27th November. He asked me to convey to the Taoiseach and the Tanaiste his strong approval of the way in which they were handling the peace process. The reaction of party members at the Conference showed that this was not just his view, but was widely shared among the rank and file of the SDLP.
2. He had had a message from Chilcot that a "positive" response had been given to the Irish Government. In the circumstances I thought it better to let him see the British draft.
3. His reaction to it was mixed: On the one hand he singled out a number of elements which he thought were positive. His first instinct was that we should work further on it with the British and see whether it could be made acceptable. His view was also that it would be better for the Taoiseach to inform the intermediaries about the development, rather than not. As he absorbed the document, however, his feeling shifted more and more to the view that it would not work. On balance he thought it likely that it was designed, not so much to "take the trick" of an IRA cessation of violence, but for presentational and public relations purposes, if the situation unravelled and positions began to be defined in public.
4. I alerted him again to the danger, if that happened of Sinn Fein invoking a draft which might suggest people were working on their traditional agenda of British withdrawal to a fixed timetable etc.
5. Hume acknowledged this point. He said he had had an invitation to communicate with the Prime Minister whenever

that was useful. He thought he might avail of this invitation now. He would, after consultation with Adams, write on his own behalf to the Prime Minister setting out, as simply as he could, the basis which he felt existed for peace.

6. I said that, provided the terms of the letter were carefully chosen, this should not present any problem for the Irish Government. I recalled however that the most recent Hume-Adams meeting had been one of the factors invoked by the British side to justify their refusal to engage properly on the present text. Hume said he was aware that this was the view of the Taoiseach. (Note: I assume from something Joe Hendron said to me, that this was relayed via Hendron and Jim Fitzpatrick).
7. I asked Hume to stay in touch with us about the terms of any letter he would propose to write.
8. (The Observer story was obviously the main point of conversation among the journalists attending the Conference. Mallie confirmed this was the story he had got wind of a couple of weeks ago, and he was resentful about the way that the NIO had sought to discredit it and him at the time. He mentioned that up to six British officials had been involved in some of the meetings with the intermediary. No-one had any convincing reason why the leak should have come via the Rev. McCrea. One journalist speculated that it might be because the source was the RUC Special Branch).

Seán
Seán O hUiginn
29 November, 1993

cc: Tanaiste
Secretary
Mr. F. Murray
Dr. M. Mansergh