

This has been faxed  
to the Secretary  
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NOTE FROM TAOISEACH

Note (for addressees eyes only) for the Tanaiste, Minister for Social Welfare, Attorney General, Secretary Teahon, Secretary O'hUiginn, Secretary Dalton and Mr. Sean Donlon

I met Mr. John Hume at his residence in Greencastle, Co. Donegal on Sunday 31 March for approximately 50 minutes.

He opened the meeting by recalling his conversations with the IRA in the company of Mr. Gerry Adams shortly after the 28th February Summit. He said that the outcome of that meeting had got an unduly negative public airing. He pointed out that at the meeting the IRA had said that they wanted to pursue an unarmed strategy.

He added that Mr. Adams was more confident now than even then that such a strategy would be pursued.

He then showed me a document which had been drawn up by "the priest". This is a reference to Fr. Reid.

The document had obviously been drawn up with the knowledge of Sinn Fein.

But Mr. Hume was meeting Mr. Adams today (Monday) and there was the possibility that the document might be amended or that another document would be put in its place.

The idea seemed to be that if such a statement could be agreed by the Irish Government, the SDLP, and Sinn Fein, there would be a ceasefire.

I asked him if it would be possible that there could be an agreement in advance that there would be a ceasefire, and that the agreed statement would be issued after the ceasefire, rather than before. He said that he had not thought about that but did not rule it out.

(My reason for putting forward the above suggestion was that I felt that it would be undesirable that the Irish Government should be seen to issue a statement in advance of the IRA ceasefire, in association with Sinn Féin).

He stressed that, during his work with Mr. Adams, he had succeeded in shifting the IRA position considerably. This was a reference to work from 1993 onwards rather than necessarily to events that had occurred in recent days.



He said the essence of the approach was that there should be an agreed nationalist approach to the unionists based on a consensus. He felt that it was more likely that agreement would be reached if each side concerted their positions in advance, rather than have a multiplicity of positions being put onto the negotiating table by a whole variety of individual parties.

We then spoke about the pressure on Sinn Fein from America and elsewhere to introduce a ceasefire. He felt that it was urgent that we capitalise on this pressure now, by getting the agreed approach that he was suggesting as contained in the document that he showed to me.

We then digressed to discuss the forthcoming elections. He stressed the importance of a referendum. He said that a unionist that he had met told him that the real problem with the referendum idea was not coming from the unionists, but from Dublin. He felt that Dublin did not want a referendum. I mentioned that we had had some bad experiences with referenda on other issues in the past and that it was an enterprise that had inherent risks.

I asked him if the approach contained in this draft statement that he had shown me was consistent with the opening of talks on June 10th. He said that it was entirely consistent with it.

I asked him if it would be required that we publish the document. He said that it would have to be published. He told me that he would have a guarantee in advance that any document published along these lines would lead to a cessation of violence. He said that this time the cessation of violence would be permanent. I did not press him on this in terms of getting guarantees of permanency. This is an area where we might follow up further.

I asked him about the controversy that had arisen about the IRA claiming that they had been told in August of 1994 that there would be all-party talks in 3 months from then. He said that there was no commitment on this point but that this was simply an assumption that had been made.

I said that, on reading the document that he had given me to look at, it seemed to be an agreement about process rather than about the content of any final settlement. He agreed that this was the case. I said that the document was broadly positive, but referred briefly to possible difficulties with paragraph 2.



I then asked him about unforeseen issues that might arise subsequently, that had not been covered in any agreed statement. I mentioned, in particular, the example of the decommissioning issue. This had not been mentioned in any previous contacts with the Irish Government in 1994 and had led to immense problems afterwards. I suggested that the Irish Government could not be placed in a position where it was considered to be breaching some implicitly agreed consensus, if it took its own line on an issue upon which no prior consultation had taken place. We could not have a situation where the IRA was dictating what constituted "the nationalist consensus", and the Irish Government was in a position where it would be judged on that basis.

He then said that there would be a necessity to have some procedure for consultation to deal with issues like this. We did not elaborate in any great detail on this.

I then asked him why he thought the IRA had resumed violence in February. He said that it was a reaction to John Major's House of Commons announcement about elections, and also an expression of general frustration about the long-fingering of talks. I said that it would be necessary to note that the IRA had chosen to resume violence at a time when the nationalist consensus was very strong on a particular issue (the elections), and that this would be a matter for

concern in regard to any possible future development of a consensus position.

We did not elaborate further on this but it is obviously a point that would need to be followed up.

We discussed how the decommissioning issue might be dealt with. He said that there should be an independent commission on decommissioning to work in parallel with the negotiations. I said that perhaps we could have a fourth strand (a decommissioning strand) in the talks. He said that he did not think it would be feasible for party politicians to be dealing with the decommissioning issue.

I asked him about reports that 85% of the delegates at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis had supported the return to violence. He said that he did not believe that that was valid and questioned the bona fides of the journalists who had published this information.

He summed up the essence of the document that he showed to me as containing two elements.

1. An agreed approach between the SDLP, Sinn Fein and the Irish Government



2. That we would work together to promote parity of esteem issues pending the reaching of an agreement.

### COMMENT

I have read through the attached document and, on first reading, I see no great problems with most of it. The only area where I see immediate difficulty is in regard to the phrase "no political party will have a veto over the progress of peace negotiations or any democratically agreed outcome of these negotiations, whatever form the outcome may take".

This is open to the interpretation that the IRA might be able to decide that the position of the unionists on a particular issue constituted a "veto", and that this justified the resumption of violence at some stage during the talks. Equally the IRA might decide that some position adopted by the British Government amounted to a "veto on the progress of the peace negotiations" with the same result. This would need to be clarified.

On the other hand, Mr. Hume pointed out to me that this phrase could be interpreted as constraining the IRA and Sinn Fein from resuming violence on the basis that they could not have a veto on what was agreed to by other people.

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