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Meeting with Mr. John Hume

1. I met Mr. Hume late on 29th October to debrief him on his meeting with the British Prime Minister.
2. He felt the atmosphere had been good. Mr. Major had been accompanied by Mr. Ancram and Mr. Holmes. The meeting lasted just under an hour.
3. Mr. Major began with strong expressions of support for Mr. Hume's work. At the same time he expressed strong doubts and concerns on the feasibility and deliverability of the enterprise, given the Lisburn bombs, the massive finds in London, etc.
4. Mr. Major then probed Hume's view. If he made a statement along the lines envisaged, would the IRA say they were finished for keeps? (He seemed to accept that "permanent" was a word which caused problems. Hume told him there was a problem for the current leadership to purport to bind future generations). Major stressed that it would be important that the language of any statement on an IRA ceasefire should make clear that it would not be their intention to resume violence under any circumstances.
5. Hume thought it would be possible to arrange that the statement would use the Governments' own language of "unequivocal restoration, etc". He seems to have given Major some undertaking that he would do so.
6. Major said that he needed something to "get people off my back". He stressed he wanted to move quickly.

7. Hume said that for Major to have greater reassurance he should send some trusted serious intermediary (e.g. Peter Brooke, Tom King) to make contact with Adams. Major hinted he would like to meet him himself after a ceasefire. Until that point he would "think over" Hume's proposal.
8. According to Hume the question of a time-table or of any drafting changes to the existing draft did not figure in the discussions.
9. Hume also spoke to Adams who confirmed he would be prepared to go to the IRA on the working assumption that the existing language of the draft would be broadly acceptable and possibly to examine in that context the likely response. They agreed to contact each other again tomorrow.

Sean Ó hUiginn

30 October 1996