

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

F E R Butler Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

23 November 1984

Dear Robin,

The Secretary of State saw Mr Hume on the evening of 22 November, and thought the Prime Minister might like to see the attached note.

The Secretary of State himself suggests that it would be helpful if the Prime Minister could find an opportunity - perhaps during Questions - to say that the analysis in the Forum Report had been stimulating and useful, even though the solutions it proposed were not acceptable to HMG.

You explained to me today that you had received a round-about suggestion that the Prime Minister and Mr Hume might meet to discuss matters. The Secretary of State thinks that it would be prudent not to take up this suggestion too precipitately, supposing that it has been faithfully reported. If the Prime Minister is content, the Secretary of State will sound out Mr Hume himself direct, when he is next in touch with him, to see whether Mr Hume is in reality actively seeking a meeting with the Prime Minister.

Copies of this letter go for information to Len Appleyard (FCO) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

Graham Sandiford

G K SANDIFORD

PS If the Prime Minister does read the attached note, she will of course need to bear in mind that Mr Hume's views are not necessarily shared by all SDLP members.

DESK BY 2.00 PM

NOTE OF SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH MR HUME ON
22 NOVEMBER 1984

At the Secretary of State's suggestion, Mr Hume and he met informally in the House of Commons on the evening of 22 November. A discussion lasting an hour followed.

2. Mr Hume said that the situation was serious. He thought that difficulty had been caused by some of the things said by the Prime Minister and by the Secretary of State at their press conferences. The Secretary of State attempted to put what had been said in context. Mr Hume had commented that, because of the historical background, when an Englishman and an Irish nationalist disagreed, the tendency was for the Irish nationalist to feel humiliated. This explained some of the emotional reaction that had occurred.

3. Mr Hume said that he was to visit Dublin within the next few days, to discuss matters with both parties (this was taken to mean Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, rather than the Irish Labour Party). Mr Hume would then take stock with other leading members of the SDLP. Meanwhile, Mr Hume would try to keep under control those of his members who were liable to express extreme reflex reactions.

4. In passing, Mr Hume volunteered that he had always been dubious about suggestions that a referendum might be held on Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, because he doubted the ability of the Irish Government to carry such a referendum. The Secretary of State noted this, and deployed in some detail, for Mr Hume's own information, his own thought that a way forward might be provided by a joint commission which, inter alia, might provide the Irish Government with a regular forum for expressing worries or grievances on behalf of nationalists. Mr Hume listened to the Secretary of State's exposition, but did not comment.

5. The Secretary of State asked Mr Hume what he thought the Government could do to calm things down. Mr Hume made two suggestions. First, it would be helpful if the Prime Minister could find an opportunity to say that the Forum Report had been stimulating and useful, even though the solutions it proposed were not acceptable to HMG. (The

Secretary of State has asked me to add that Mr Michael Mates MP made a similar suggestion to him earlier in the day.) Secondly, Mr Hume suggested that the Secretary of State should find the opportunity to make a speech concentrating on the problems of the nationalist community. This could cover difficulties over jobs (including the crisis at the Molins factory in Londonderry, and the failure of De Lorean in West Belfast), and also the casualties suffered in the troubles (perhaps with particular reference to Newry and Strabane). A speech of this kind would be very helpful in showing understanding of the difficulties. As to Molins, Mr Hume was full of praise for the efforts made by Dr Boyson to find a way of saving the factory from having to close.

6. The Secretary of State pressed Mr Hume to suggest how talks among the parties in Northern Ireland might be promoted. Mr Hume did not question the need for such talks. Not surprisingly, Mr Hume could not see how such talks could develop within the Northern Ireland Assembly. Mr Hume thought the best course would be for him to have separate talks with each of the leaders of the UUP, the DUP and the Alliance Party. He undertook to try to do this and to let the Secretary of State know the outcome.

7. The Secretary of State welcomed Mr Hume's suggestion. He explained to Mr Hume that, at the back of his mind, he had the thought that at a later stage it might be helpful to ask some suitable person to undertake 'back-to-back' diplomacy, acting as an intermediary between the party leaders. The Secretary of State added, however, that he was not wedded to this idea, and had not yet considered who might be suitable to act as intermediary or what the terms of reference might be. Mr Hume expressed interest in the idea and said that, if it were pursued, a suitable intermediary might be Mr Robert Jackson MP. Mr Hume said that both he and Dr Paisley knew Mr Jackson well from the time when Mr Jackson had been a member of the European Parliament, and that Mr Jackson was both very intelligent and trustworthy.

8. The Secretary of State and Mr Hume agreed that, in answer to any press enquiries, it should be said that he and the Secretary of

E.R.

CONFIDENTIAL

State had met at the Secretary of State's suggestion; that they had taken stock of the outcome of the Anglo-Irish Summit and events since; that Mr Hume had expressed his criticisms of things that had been said at the press conferences; and that the Secretary of State had made clear that the Government's priority was to give effect to the terms of the communiqué, which had set out the guidelines for future activity.

9. I am recording separately a brief discussion which the Secretary of State and Mr Hume had on the same occasion about the Elections (Northern Ireland) Bill.

Graham Sandiford

G K SANDIFORD
23 November 1984

CONFIDENTIAL