

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



<b>Reference Code:</b>	2015/89/89
<b>Creation Date(s):</b>	15 January 1985
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	11 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Secret

Strategy Meeting 15 January, 1985

1. Purpose of the meeting is to consider strategy in the light of:
  - Hume's meeting with Thatcher on 17.1.1985.
  - Nally/Armstrong meeting in Dublin on 21.1.1985.
  
2. To a certain extent the approach to the meeting of 21/1 will be determined by the outcome of Hume's meeting with Thatcher. The basic approach to the meeting of 21/1 has already been established: it is to listen to the proposals of the British side.
  
3. It is suggested that the approach to Hume at the preparatory meeting with Hume on the evening of the 16 January should be to try to get him to understand and accept that certain basic factors have to be taken into account in dealing with Thatcher if Hume is, not alone to make progress, but to ensure that he does not do damage.
  
4. Alienation is the basic factor in Thatcher's interest in a possible initiative. Paradoxically this is so despite her rejection of the word as such. From our knowledge of the internal discussions of the British side, we know that her interest in "doing something rather than nothing" dates back to the Taoiseach's long discussion with her in November 1983 which was based essentially on the dangers to both countries of alienation in the nationalist community in Northern Ireland spreading. Basically the British including Thatcher were afraid that a certain scenario would develop: that Sinn Fein would overtake the SDLP in some forthcoming election,

thereby winning a spurious although presentable "mandate" for the gun; that the IRA would raise the level of violence in Northern Ireland against the Protestant community invoking its "mandate" to do so; that the sovereign Governments would then have considerable political difficulty in presenting the case that each had separately made against the "illegitimate" use of violence; that the IRA would seek to create situations in Northern Ireland, notably through stirring up sectarian conflict, which would destabilise opinion in the South leading they would hope to undermining the authority of the Government here, thus creating an opportunity for themselves to "take power in Ireland with the armalite in the one hand and the ballot paper in the other". In terms of our dealings with Thatcher, there is a serious problem in John Hume's approach - an understandable and "laudable" problem - and that is that he is both publicly and privately confident that the SDLP will more than hold its own against Sinn Fein in the forthcoming local elections. He talks of organising a television debate with Gerry Adams in the next ten days or so as a backdrop to his own party conference. He believes the debate will damage Adams seriously. The problem is that whatever reality lies behind Thatcher's willingness to do "something rather than nothing", it is based on a perceived threat to the SDLP posed by Sinn Fein. Ministers might like to discuss with Hume the possibility that a much larger campaign by Sinn Fein could be mounted very late in the day just before the close of nominations with a view to taking the SDLP by surprise. Whether or not he would be prepared to consider that, it is at any rate crucial that, in his dealings with Thatcher, he should not present himself as being over-confident nor should he write off the Sinn Fein threat.

5. A second danger with Thatcher is that Hume might get bogged down with her in a discussion of the rather philosophical question of the nature of "consent" as it is incorporated in the "British guarantee". Such an issue is absolutely foreign to Thatcher's cast of mind at the best of times, but would be likely to cause both confusion and resentment if raised by Hume

with her on Thursday. On the other hand there is one aspect of her thinking about Northern Ireland which is fundamentally deficient and on which Hume might be able to make a dent: that is her failure to look at the problem of Northern Ireland in an historical context. On the one hand she says both in public and in private that this is an old problem going back at least to the twelfth century, while at the same time she is prepared to consider action in relation to the nationalists, not in terms of their political rights as an historically indigenous people, but only as a group of UK citizens who can't enjoy the full "freedoms of the law" because of their situation in their ghettos, persecuted by their own extremists and out of sympathy with the security system. On the positive side she does admit the "outrageous misbehaviour" of the unionists towards them and she was strongly critical of the failure of the Wilson Administration to stand up to the Loyalists workers' strike of May, 1974. What Hume conceivably might be able to bring home to her more directly than Dublin is the sense of the minority of being "coralled", not just into their ghettos, but historically into Northern Ireland itself. It would be useful if she could be brought to look at this problem not just in its moral dimension i.e. the problem of nationalists' rights, but as a practical irreducible problem which cannot be wished away and which, if there is to be stability, must be faced up to in its full dimensions and accommodated in new institutions.

6. As has been discussed, the major "trap" for Hume in this encounter comes from the new public "reasonableness" of the unionists which creates an opening for Thatcher to say to Hume: "Now, Jim Molyneaux and even Paisley are being extremely conciliatory and want to have talks with you; why don't you talk to them?" Aside from the element of embarrassment in all of this, this approach creates an opening for the British to try to move on an internal devolved government without any Irish dimension. We know both from what Martin Smith has said in public, and even more from what Peter Smith has said in private, that the unionists expect to be "pushed" to a

considerable extent on an Irish dimension. Given Thatcher's own hang-up on sovereignty, it is now likely that it is the British, even more than the unionists, that will resist an Irish dimension if they can possibly get away with it. A show of conciliation by the unionists puts the British and the unionists, for the first time, in a "reasonable" posture and creates an opening for the British to get off the hook of the Irish demension if they so wish. The only answer which Hume could give to Thatcher which would be likely to carry any conviction with her, would be to be perfectly candid and say that the alienation of the minority is so deep and their distrust of the British and the unionists so strong, that nothing short of a major role for the Irish Government in relation to Northern Ireland would create the "political framework" for stability (note: Thatcher in her Press Conference after Chequers and in her House of Commons statements called for a "new political framework").

7. It would seem prudent that Hume should not show in his talks with Thatcher any detailed awareness of the exchanges between London and Dublin either at ministerial or official levels on the various elements of a package for a solution. At the same time there are certain key demands on our side which it would be important that he should either raise himself or, if they are raised, support our position. This is particularly important in relation to both the RUC and the UDR, where we have called for a major restructuring and redeployment of the RUC and the removal of the UDR from public patrolling functions. Hume should also be told about our suggestion for a form of devolved government for Northern Ireland involving, at least for a time, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland as Chairman (when I discussed this with him some months ago he seemed to be ready to live with it).

8. It would also be useful if Hume could make the point as an "outsider" to Dublin that Thatcher by her remarks on the Forum options and on "alienation" had done serious damage to the

Taoiseach and to the Government in Dublin.

9. Thatcher herself has of course never taken the Forum Report as such seriously and that is the reason why, until her post-Chequers reflection before coming to Dublin Castle, like so many people she saw the Report as "proposing" the three options and nothing else. In the course of her Press Conference at Dublin Castle she said that there was much merit in the Report itself. That would seem to create a useful opportunity for Hume to stress to her, as he has been doing in public, his belief that the essence of the Report lies in the Realities and Requirement and that they provide the framework for a solution. It so happens that the central theme of the Realities and Requirements (which, as Hume said in an interview with John Bowman broadcast last week, is prefigured in section 4.17 of the Forum Report and which asserts the identities and the rights of both traditions in Northern Ireland in new structures) is in fact substantially endorsed by the Chequers Communique. Hume could argue that it is impossible to accommodate the "identity" of Irish nationalists anywhere without involving the Irish Government in an appropriate way in the structure.

9. Overall, Hume's objective should perhaps be to strengthen Thatcher's sense of urgency about the problem, her sense that "something" should be done and that it is possible to do "something". At the same time he might try to expand her awareness of the reality of the Northern nationalists' dilemma.

#### Strategy for the Next Summit

10. Ministers might wish to use the opportunity of their meeting with Hume to cover some points which are important in determining in Dublin what would and what would not be "adequate".

11. The first question would seem to be whether Northern nationalists could accept a series of Summits, if that were necessary, each of which would agree a certain number of measures but each of which would assert the commitment of the two Governments to continue to agree on further measures at other Summits. On the other hand Northern nationalists might feel that the whole thing should be done in one "bite" (my own feeling is that Hume's judgement is that the "cumulative" approach would be acceptable). If the "cumulative" approach is acceptable to Hume, it might be useful to discuss which elements should come first and which later: the suggestion has been made that one would start with the relatively easier issues such as the Parliamentary Tier, the Mixed Court, the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland; go on to the restructuring and redeployment of the security system with perhaps the Joint Security Commission and the All-Ireland Law Commission; leaving until later in the year both devolution and the institutional arrangements which would give Dublin a formal role in the government of Northern Ireland.

12. On the constituent elements of the "package", it is unlikely that there would be any points of issue with Hume on the following: the All-Ireland Mixed Court, the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, the All-Ireland Law Commission. There are other items however on which his views would be useful (I have the impression that in some cases he has not given the implications much personal thought).

13. Devolution is the most difficult issue politically for the SDLP. As events have seemed to move against the nationalist interest (Chequers), the SDLP attitude to the Assembly has publicly hardened. On the one hand Hume says that the SDLP would like fresh elections but, when the point is put to him, he seems to accept that elections would pose a great threat to any new institutions (as in early 1974). While it would seem wrong to ask the SDLP publicly to accept them, there are two points which might be put at this stage to Hume: first, that a

devolved government based on power-sharing should and must be part of the eventual package; second, that in practical terms if the package is to be launched during this year, the only pragmatic approach is to base the devolved government in some way or another on the Assembly, either as an Executive chosen from outside the Assembly but reporting to it, or as an Executive chosen from the Assembly and reporting to it (with the possibility, in either case, of the Secretary of State being Chairman of the Executive). The issue of devolution also poses a major tactical problem not alone for the SDLP but for Dublin. The point might be made to Hume that there is a crucial need for the closest co-ordination in our separate approaches to the British. We would seem to be agreed that it is essential that the devolution issue should not at any stage or in any way take precedence over the Irish dimension.

14. Parliamentary Tier: This is of course not a major structure, but it has become an important target on the nationalist side because of the way that the debate about the AIIC has developed. Ambassador Dorr has proposed that there should be an election based on proportional representation to return the members of the Tier from Northern Ireland. This might have strong attractions for Hume as it would create an opening to avoid the difficult issue of the Assembly. There are however important objections to this and these should be considered by Ministers before the Ambassador's idea is put to Hume. The principal objection is that it gives an opportunity, if he requires it, to Paisley to "take to the hills". While it is true that Paisley is at this moment in an unprecedented way taking a conciliatory approach largely to defend the survival of the Assembly, it must be remembered that his most successful ploys in politics have been his demagogic efforts to play on the fears of the unionist people. The second objection is that neither of the unionist parties would "play": neither in the election nor of course afterwards in the Parliamentary Tier itself. An alternative approach and one which would have attractions for the British themselves would be to give a role to the Assembly in the Parliamentary Tier, a

role which if the unionists did not wish to take up, could nevertheless be undertaken by the SDLP. This approach would help the SDLP to get off the hook of their electoral mandate not to go into the Assembly, because they would be provided with a pretext, for nationalist reasons for going into the Assembly with the benefits that that would involve (financial to SDLP members of the Assembly, and otherwise opening opportunities for devolved government within the package).

15. Policing: It has been difficult hitherto to pin down Hume on the various questions involved in this issue. First, is there any conceivable restructuring of the RUC, e.g. on a "community basis" which would win Hume's support? Second, would the removal of the UDR from patrol duty and their confinement to administrative work and their replacement on patrol by the British army be acceptable? Third, would a role in relation to the appointments of senior officers, complaints and policy guidelines for the representative of the Irish Government in a Joint Security Commission be adequate to make the whole security system acceptable within the context of a new package (involving also the Mixed Court, the All-Ireland Law Commission, the Bill of Rights, the Parliamentary Tier and devolved government)?

16. Role of the Irish Government: What we have been talking to the British about is of course an Irish Minister partially resident in Belfast with an office in Stormont and a staff permanently established in Stormont and possibly other sub-offices elsewhere in Northern Ireland. The Minister would be involved in a range of issues which would vary considerably in number depending on whether or not there was a devolved government. In the case of a devolved government the minimum issues that the Minister would be involved in would be: the issues of Irish national identity which arise in many areas, e.g. education, broadcasting, flags and emblems, place-names etc; the whole question of control of security and the nomination of the membership of a devolved government for Northern Ireland. In the absence of a devolved government

or pending the establishment of a devolved government, the Irish Minister would be involved in all the serious issues which would otherwise be handled by the devolved government itself. The British say there would have to be some selectivity about establishing those issues if only for administrative manageability. A criterion for selection which might be acceptable to us would be that the Irish Minister would necessarily be involved in decision-making on any issue which came to the Secretary of State or his Ministers for decision (there might be traps in this formula which we would of course have to examine extremely carefully). The problem about this whole area which must be faced is that, with the possible exception of three areas in relation to security which have been mentioned above, there is realistically no prospect of the British conceding at this stage a full role in decision-making to the Irish Minister. The problem is to devise a formula, which both in its words and in its operational dimension, will require substantively a considerably greater role in decision-making to be conceded to the Irish minister than "mere consultation" (which could mean no more than a phonecall to confirm that the British are about to take some action whether or not the Irish care). It would need to be explained to Hume that some formulae were put to Thatcher, e.g. the idea of a right of appeal to the Summit, which she rejected. There are however other formulae possible e.g. a formal written obligation on both sides to seek agreement and a formal acceptance by both sides that the exercise of seeking agreement would be essential to the establishment of stability and peace in Northern Ireland.

17. Anglo-Irish Agreement and the Irish Constitution: There would be strong attractions for both sides in establishing the maximum degree of "finality" about a package. This would involve consolidating the entire set of measures in a new Anglo-Irish Agreement and at the same time taking action in relation to Articles 2 and 3 i.e. replacing them with forms of words based on the Forum Report setting out the nationalist

aspiration to a sovereign independent united Ireland. Ministers might have to be ready to contemplate taking this approach if the whole package were to be delivered at one "bite" at the next Summit; otherwise, consideration of the move could be deferred until later in the year if necessary until before the last Summit in the series which would deliver the package. These are points which Ministers might wish to discuss with Hume at this stage.

Hume's requests

18. Hume has made two specific requests to us:

- that we suggest to the British that a new voting system be established for Westminster elections in Northern Ireland i.e. the single seat constituency election by use of the alternative vote i.e. the system used in bye-elections here;
  
- that we suggest to the British that Commissions be established under the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council to monitor and promote North/South cooperation in the several economic areas identified by the Forum Report.

We have on instructions told Hume that these matters are been given favourable considerable for action, not as part of a package but to be put directly to British Ministers as things which should be undertaken in their own right. He has expressed agreement with this approach.

It would be useful if our Ministers would confirm to him that these two suggestions will now be acted upon e.g. at the forthcoming meeting (4 or 5 February) between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Secretary of State Hurd.

19. The SDLP has also adopted, as a Party, the notion that two suggestions should be discussed with the Government and the Opposition against the possibility that there might be a

"further impasse" at a future Summit i.e.

- that the Parties in the Forum would set up machinery in Northern Ireland to monitor and alert world opinion to the grievances of the minority, particularly in the area of human rights;
- that the Parties in the Forum would establish their own "Irish dimension": some sort of institutional machinery to monitor and promote North/South activity in the economic areas identified by the Forum Report.

Hume privately considers these suggestions to be somewhat negative in character at this stage and feels that they could be overtaken by positive action on his own two suggestions. He has himself taken action to delay the presentation of a "piece of paper" on these particular matters to the Government and the main Opposition Party in Dublin so as to avoid creating problems here.

U.S. Dimension

20. The Secretary will report to Ministers on possibilities for action in this area arising from his recent visit to the U.S.



15 January, 1985

c.c. Personal & Secret  
Taoiseach  
Tanaiste  
Minister  
Secretary  
Mr. Nally