

SUBJECT
cc Master

RESTRICTED



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

*File LB
LOSING
cc Mr. Nallaly (Co)
Mr. Gaghan*

*27 February 1986
J. P. C. [Signature]*

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR. JOHN HUME, M.P.

The Prime Minister had a meeting in the House of Commons this afternoon with Mr. John Hume, M.P. The Northern Ireland Secretary was also present.

The Prime Minister invited Mr. Hume to give his assessment of the current situation in Northern Ireland. Mr. Hume said that what had happened had been totally predictable. Every time Parliament took a step towards a settlement in Northern Ireland, the Unionists always resisted. They were deliberately misrepresenting the Anglo-Irish Agreement to their supporters. In practice, the Agreement gave something to the minority but took nothing away from the Unionist majority. In the past, the Unionists had succeeded in wrecking every agreement. If this time they were not allowed to get away with it, a real debate would start within the Unionist community leading on to serious dialogue with the SDLP. He had indications that a large body of Unionist opinion was very disturbed by the way in which matters were moving. His advice to the Government was to name a date for a round table conference on devolution. The SDLP and the Alliance would certainly be there without setting any pre-conditions. He believed that the Unionists

/would also

LB.

RESTRICTED

- 2 -

would also in the end turn up.

The Prime Minister said that there was an impression current that the SDLP wanted to see a confrontation between the Government and Unionists, to teach the Unionists a lesson. This was counter-productive and most certainly not the Government's policy. There was also a strong feeling that the SDLP were failing to give full support to the security forces. It would not be possible to achieve reconciliation in Northern Ireland unless the SDLP came half way to meet the Unionists. Mr. Hume said that the allegations made by the Prime Minister were Unionist points. The SDLP had gone out of its way not to be triumphalist. Certainly they had said that, if the Unionists tried to over-throw the Anglo-Irish Agreement by undemocratic means, the Government must stand firm. But they had avoided provocative remarks.

The Prime Minister said that the Unionists saw the Agreement as a step to help the minority, while the majority got nothing from it. That was why, at her recent meeting with Mr. Molyneaux and Dr. Paisley, she had made proposals for consultations with the Unionists and had taken up their proposal for a round table conference on devolution. They had to be offered something. She could not exchange the non-cooperation of the minority for non-cooperation of the majority. Mr. Hume said that the Unionists alleged that the SDLP did not want devolution. But as he had said in his letter to the Prime Minister, they were ready to sit down and discuss it at any time with no pre-conditions. The Agreement gave the minority full equality and there was no longer any reason for them not to participate fully in the process of Government in Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister said that it was important to bring home to the Unionists that, if arrangements for devolution acceptable to both communities were achieved, the subjects which would become the responsibility of the devolved body would cease to be within the purview of the Inter-Governmental Conference. Mr. Hume agreed that this was a correct interpretation of the

/Agreement.

Agreement.

The Prime Minister said that negotiations on devolution would not be easy. The Government would need first to work out an agenda and a framework and a number of alternative structures on the lines of the 1979 White Paper. Mr. Hume said that the Unionists understood either domination or being dominated, which was what they now feared. They did not understand the concept of resolution of differences. The Prime Minister would find the SDLP constructive.

The Prime Minister said that it would be very helpful if the SDLP could give more open support to the security forces. Mr. Hume retorted that the SDLP were better than the Unionists in this respect. They fully supported the security forces in upholding the rule of law impartially. It was not the SDLP who organised strikes and marches or paraded with masked men. It was the Unionists who put a strain on the security forces. Admittedly the minority had an emotional problem with the police because of past history. But the SDLP were ready to play their part, for instance, by putting up names for the Police Authority. The Northern Ireland Secretary said that the SDLP's standard line on the security forces was regarded by the Unionists as only qualified support. It would be helpful if new language could be found.

Mr. Hume said that the Prime Minister must understand that there was an organised campaign on the part of the Unionists to frighten the British Government. He very much hoped that the Government would call their bluff. The Prime Minister said that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would not succeed unless the Unionists could be persuaded to accept or at least acquiesce in it. She needed the help of the SDLP to achieve this.

The Prime Minister said that it would be helpful if a statement could be issued following her meeting with Mr. Hume. Mr. Hume was concerned that this might appear to be made under pressure from the Unionists but agreed, on
/reflection,

RESTRICTED

- 4 -

reflection, to the Prime Minister's suggestion. The attached statement was then drafted and agreed with Mr. Hume.

I am copying this letter, and enclosure, to Joan MacNaughton (Lord President's Office), Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Stephen Boys Smith (Home Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

Jim Daniell, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland held a meeting this afternoon with Mr John Hume, M.P., leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party.

The Prime Minister confirmed the Government's commitment to implement the Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr Hume reaffirmed the SDLP's willingness to enter into discussions on devolution at any time without preconditions. Mr Hume recognised that, in accordance with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, if arrangements for devolution acceptable to both communities were achieved, the subjects which would become the responsibility of the devolved body would cease to be within the purview of the Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr Hume confirmed that the SDLP fully support the Security Forces in Northern Ireland in carrying out their duty of upholding the law impartially. The SDLP totally and utterly reject violence and all those who are involved in it or in support of it. They made clear their sympathy for the relatives of all those members of the Security Forces who had been killed or wounded by terrorists, and indeed for all innocent victims of terrorism.

The Prime Minister will be seeing other political leaders in Northern Ireland in the near future to discuss among other things devolution and will thereafter have further contacts with Mr Hume.

The Prime Minister held a meeting this afternoon with Mr John Hume, M.P., leader of the Social Democrat and Labour Party.

Mr Hume reaffirmed the SDLP's willingness to enter into discussions on devolution without preconditions at any time. The Prime Minister and Mr Hume confirmed that when arrangements for devolution acceptable to both communities were achieved, the subjects which would become the responsibility of the devolved body would cease to be within the purview of the Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr Hume ~~also~~ confirmed that the SDLP fully support the Security Forces in Northern Ireland in carrying out their duty of upholding the law impartially. The SDLP totally and utterly reject violence and all those who were involved in it or in support of it. They made clear their sympathy for all those members of the Security Forces who had been killed or wounded by terrorists.

The Prime Minister confirmed the Government's commitment to implement the Anglo-Irish Agreement. She would be seeing other political leaders in Northern Ireland to discuss a round table conference on devolution and would thereafter have further contacts with Mr Hume.



file JH

bcc NIO ✓

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 February 1986

Dear Mr. Hume,

I am hoping to have a word with you on the telephone but this is just to let you know that your meeting with the Prime Minister at 1615 this coming Thursday will now take place in her room at the House of Commons and not at No. 10 Downing Street.

Yours sincerely
Caroline Ryder

CAROLINE RYDER

John Hume, Esq., M.P.