

SECRET



*held 6*

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

5 August 1980

*Dear Roy,*

You wrote to Michael Alexander on 30 July 1980 reporting Mr. John Hume's account of what Mr. Haughey had told him about his meeting with the Prime Minister in Venice.

I have shown your letter to the Prime Minister, and she has asked me to make it absolutely clear that she said nothing to Mr. Haughey which could have given him the impression that she did not expect the government's initiative in publishing proposals for the Government of Northern Ireland to get anywhere. What she did tell Mr. Haughey was that the Government's proposals would be published within a few weeks and that we would then have to discuss them with the various parties. She offered no view at all on what would happen after that.

Where Mr. Haughey and Mr. Hume between them have reported the Prime Minister accurately is in what she said to Mr. Haughey about spending time this summer thinking about Northern Ireland. She has confirmed that she does propose to spend some time during the next few weeks going over the history of the problem of Ireland in order to put the immediate situation in a wider perspective and to see how, against the background of the Government's present proposals, we might best move ahead. The Prime Minister also wants to look at the history of the problem in the particular context of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic to try and assess what the prospects are of developing that relationship in a way which is in the long term interests of both countries. She believes that Mr. Haughey genuinely wants to improve relations between ourselves and the Republic and that he is expecting far more of the relationship than we are. She has commented that she fears that he will eventually be very disappointed.

I think it would be appropriate if this letter were given only a very restricted circulation.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely,*

*Alan White*

*KRB*

Roy Harrington, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

(relead) 5



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
GREAT GEORGE STREET,  
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

Michael Alexander Esq  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

*no one saw (said)  
such thing. I told him  
the white paper would be  
out within a few weeks  
and then we would  
have to discuss it.  
Prime Minister will be possible.  
No comment - don't say anything  
would you mind?*

30 July 1980

*1 agree*

*You will want to be aware of A. This incident confirms me  
in my view, with which I think you agree, that whatever Mr  
Haughey chooses to do, you should insist on having a second  
taken forward next time.*

*Dear Michael,*

Following publication of the Government's proposals for the  
Government of Northern Ireland we have now opened discussions  
with the political parties. At an early stage we came across  
one matter mentioned by John Hume of which you should be aware.

John Hume has told us that he received from Mr Haughey an account  
of the latter's discussions with the Prime Minister in Venice. We  
do not suppose it to be true: but according to Mr Haughey, the  
Prime Minister told him first that she did not expect the Government's  
initiative to get anywhere, and second that she intended to spend  
a lot of time this summer thinking about Northern Ireland and what  
the Government was going to do about it. There are plenty of things  
within the Government's proposals which the SDLP do not like, and  
you will appreciate how damaging it would be to our negotiations  
with his party if Mr Hume believed that the Government were less  
than serious about them - and from his reaction it was clear that  
Mr Hume did believe this tale when he heard it. Furthermore, if  
John Hume were to see his interests served by disclosing this account  
to Dr Paisley, for example in Strasbourg where they meet quite  
informally, the consequences could be serious and even dangerous.  
The relationship which the Secretary of State has built up  
painstakingly with Dr Paisley would be completely destroyed, in a  
manner which could have security implications both generally and  
for those with whom Dr Paisley believes he has been negotiating in  
good faith.

We weighed in immediately by pointing out to Mr Hume that the Venice  
meeting occurred before the Prime Minister and her colleagues had  
even begun to consider in any detail the Government's proposals for  
further discussion; and that the proposals themselves had been most  
rigorously worked over by Ministers, including the Prime Minister,  
and had been approved by Cabinet as a whole. The Secretary of State  
has left Hume in no doubt, we believe, that the Government is serious  
in putting forward proposals for further discussion and that he will  
be conducting discussions and negotiations with the political parties  
over the next few months with a view to putting to his colleagues in the  
autumn proposals framed in the light of those discussions. The same  
message has also been conveyed in the course of our informal contacts

*!!!A,*

*I believe that the W.P. is a step and a considerable one  
in John Hume's direction and the months will come not-  
for him but for the U.U's.  
me.*

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with officials of the Republic, in particular their Ambassador in London.

We think this episode is now disposed of. Certainly we had a useful two hours of discussion with John Hume and Seamus Mallon last week and a further meeting is being arranged. But it is a reminder that the relationships which have been established are fragile, and that their breakdown in an atmosphere which called in question the Government's good faith would wreck not just the present policy but also any alternative - and could have some nasty security implications.

I am copying this letter to George Walden (FCO) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours ever,  
R. Harrington.*

R A HARRINGTON

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The reference to the summer news is to the  
"unique" relationship between the Irish  
Republic and the United Kingdom and whether  
it can be developed in any way in the

long term interests of us both. He is quite right  
in saying that I personally did intend to  
spend some time on going over the history  
of the Irish problem to see how we could  
best go ahead and do just a little first for

the long term  
of the problem - in the context of U.K. / Irish Republic  
relations - which he wants to improve.  
I may say that was because he is still

in his heart of hearts expecting far more than  
we are and is looking forward to the best  
outcome or if it will result in a positive  
and considerable step forward to a very much  
closer relationship. I think he will be disappointed -  
very disappointed - because I would not do that  
unless on the specific cases I put to him.  
no

