

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

SUBJECT  
MASTER

Filed on:

0730 4/7  
FAXED

From the Private Secretary

3 July 1996

*Dear Martin,*

#### HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

The Prime Minister met Sir Patrick Mayhew this afternoon to discuss the Prime Minister's meeting with John Hume yesterday, and the letter from Adams. Sir Robin Butler and Sir John Chilcot were also there.

It was agreed that the Adams' letter was clever in substance and in timing. The response to Hume's approach therefore needed a good deal of care. The Prime Minister made clear that he was not attracted by any kind of direct contact with Sinn Fein in present circumstances. Any response should also be careful not to suggest that Sinn Fein could walk straight into the talks if a new ceasefire were declared. It would be for Sinn Fein and the IRA to demonstrate convincingly, through their actions, that it was not just a further tactical device.

It was agreed that our response should put the ball back firmly in the Sinn Fein court, and that we should also seek to play the issue reasonably long. If any new ceasefire were to result, it would be much easier to handle if the Belfast talks had by then broken for the summer. The Prime Minister was not attracted by the NIO draft letter to John Hume, but it was desirable to go back to Hume, rather than Adams directly, and to do so in writing in some way, in order to avoid the risk of Hume passing on what was said unreliably. This pointed to either a letter from the Prime Minister (or me) to John Hume, or a speaking note to be given to Hume.

The content should be largely interrogative and aim to make clear that it was not for us to establish our good faith, but for Sinn Fein to explain to us how any new ceasefire could be made credible and convincing. They should also be asked whether they would be prepared to accept publicly the proposal that some decommissioning should take place during the negotiations.

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

The Prime Minister looks forward to seeing a revised draft or drafts accordingly. The language might usefully reflect some of what Bruton has said to Sinn Fein, and perhaps pick up Adams' own comments reported in today's *Irish Times*.

I am copying this to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

3 July 1996

Yours ever  
John

JOHN HOLMES

Martin Howard, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

Teabon's reaction was to ask that I should keep him in touch and in particular let him know if we did propose to say anything new in public. I said that I thought we would want to consider the position carefully before rushing in, but undertook to keep in close touch. Teabon's concern on the substance was that we should not ignore these approaches or refuse to respond. The IRA should not be given new excuses to step up the violence. It would be better to say what we were being asked, if it really gave us no difficulty, and put the onus back on the IRA to produce a ceasefire.

I am copying this letter to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever  
John

JOHN HOLMES

Martin Howard, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

CONFIDENTIAL