

CONFIDENTIAL

From: JOHN HOLMES
Date: 1 July 1996

PRIME MINISTER

JOHN HUME

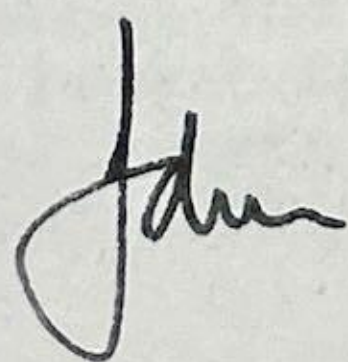
1. The background to this call, which Hume has insisted be "private", is that he approached Paddy Mayhew last Wednesday, and subsequently spoke to me, about his urgent need to see you. He said that he had talked to Adams, and that if we could just make the right kind of statement, involving no new concessions from us, there was a real prospect of a new ceasefire.
2. As you know, Tony Lake also raised this with me in Lyon. He had spoken to both Hume and Adams. Lake was as sceptical about Hume's credibility as an intermediary as we are, but believed, on the basis of his conversations, that Adams was serious. In order to prevent Hume getting it all wrong, Adams had apparently given Hume a letter, unusually, setting out three points where further assurances from HMG would make the difference:
 - the Belfast talks would be serious, comprehensive and inclusive;
 - decommissioning would be tackled in the course of the negotiations and would not be a pre-condition;
 - other confidence-building measures, such as prisoner releases, would also be considered in the course of negotiations.
3. It is not clear whether Hume will bring Adams' letter with him (and we should not reveal that we have heard of its existence), or whether his proposals will be exactly as above.

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4. The NIO brief below recommends you listen politely, and make clear that it is for Sinn Fein to produce a ceasefire, not for us to do more. The brief also suggests that you point out to Hume the number of times in the past we and the Irish Government have been told what was needed for a new ceasefire, only to be let down by Sinn Fein.
5. You will not want to reject the idea of looking at whatever proposal Hume brings, but will also not want to make any promises. It is for Sinn Fein to establish their credibility with us, not the other way around. The IRA's recent actions speak louder than Sinn Fein's words. And we are not interested in any new separate negotiation with Sinn Fein about the Belfast talks. If they want to influence these, it is up to them to create the conditions to enable them to join in.
6. Hume may suggest that Sinn Fein are feeling a lack of contact with us. There are two points here. First, they have not asked for any contact in recent months. Second, while we would not be ready to talk to them in present circumstances, there are plenty of ways in which they can get their real views across to us if they need to. They seem to prefer playing public games with words, and making vague suggestions that just one more statement from someone else will do the trick.
7. As the NIO brief suggests, Hume may express his own frustration about the Belfast talks. The SDLP are angry in particular that the Ground Rules paper is being undermined by the Unionists. You could express understanding, while making clear your belief that the talks should move forward soon on to more substantive issues, under Mitchell's guidance, and urging the SDLP to make a success of them.



JOHN HOLMES

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