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From the Private Secretary

3 October 1996

Dear Gen,

Pr 28
cc 940

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

The Prime Minister has decided that we should not go ahead this week with publication of the text sent to John Hume. The circumstances are not propitious, following the UUP's move on decommissioning. There are also obvious advantages in waiting for Adams' response, via Hume, before going ahead. This means in practice that publication will be delayed until the week beginning 14 October.

The delay does not increase the attraction of negotiating on the text with Hume. The Prime Minister has not yet taken a view on whether we should agree to amend the text in response to the Irish suggestions. We will need to look at this again when we have any proposals from Hume. You suggest in your letter of 2 October that we can make changes in the text, as long as they are within the ambit of existing policy, without risking criticism. This is not necessarily the case. Making any changes will reinforce the arguments of those inclined to claim that we have negotiated a ceasefire with the IRA. But we cannot come to a sensible judgment on the balance of risks until we know what Hume is proposing.

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

Yours ac
John

JOHN HOLMES

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Northern Ireland Office