

Prime Minister

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I hope this is
self-explanatory, including
my comments. Any
immediate, or different,
reactions/ thoughts, please you!

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

Dear Ken,

HUME/ADAMS' INITIATIVE

There are real
political dangers.

I do have four
6 September 1996

Thought - a word
please. / 7.9

... Having warned me yesterday that he was in the final stages of negotiation with Adams, John Hume has now sent me the attached draft statement for use by the British Government. He said that it had been cleared explicitly with Adams, who had cleared it also with the IRA. The position now was that if we were ready to make this statement, and the IRA knew when we were going to make it, they would respond shortly afterwards, at a time specified in advance, with a renewed "total cessation".

Hume added that there were three key issues for Sinn Fein/IRA:

- (i) that there should be no preconditions to negotiations. The key problem here was decommissioning. But he claimed they accepted the parallel approach in the Mitchell Report;
- (ii) a timeframe for negotiations. The Sinn Fein/IRA view was that this should be six months. Hume thought that in practice they might accept a review of the negotiations after six months.
- (iii) Confidence building measures, by which was meant prisoners. Sinn Fein/IRA wanted to be sure that there would be movement on this issue if there was a new ceasefire.

Sinn Fein/IRA would need private assurances on these three points, in addition to the public statement, conveyed through a third party, which could be Hume himself but need not be, before they would announce a new ceasefire.

I said that at a quick read, although much of the draft was unexceptionable, I could see quite a number of problems. Those which stood out particularly were language about the timeframe; the references to no veto over the process; the references to decommissioning; the language on justice and policing; and the sentence on equality of treatment of the Irish language and culture. I was also unclear what was meant by the references in the last paragraph to the contributions of the EU and South Africa.

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Hume said that the key issues were the three he had already mentioned. The language in the draft need not be regarded as sacrosanct, and the less important parts of it should certainly be amendable.

I said that I also wanted to be absolutely clear about the status of this piece of paper. Hume had told Edward Oakden a few weeks ago that there was no commitment to a ceasefire if a statement was made, only a commitment by Sinn Fein to approach the IRA about one. Hume said that this had now been resolved. The IRA had cleared the text and agreed to move to a ceasefire if the right statement was made. He insisted that there was now no doubt about this.

I also asked whether Sinn Fein were insisting on a meeting with the British Government in advance. He said not.

I said that we would obviously need to look at this text and consider what Hume had said. I undertook to go back to him with our response. We left it at that.

Comment

It remains difficult to be sure how seriously to take Hume over all this. But he seemed surer of his ground than in past conversations, although as vague as ever for the most part. He was fresh from a meeting with Adams on the evening of 5 September, and categoric about the Sinn Fein/IRA position.

Using the attached draft as it stands is obviously out of the question, but we need to look carefully at how much of it might be acceptable, and consider how best to respond. It remains the case that there are few if any other indications, beyond Hume's own comments, that the IRA is ready to declare another ceasefire. But it also remains difficult for us not to respond, given that the Americans (and no doubt the Irish - though Hume denies this) will presumably be well aware of what is being put to us. I would be grateful for your comments and recommendations. It would be helpful if we could receive these in the course of next week.

Yours ever
John
JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay Esq
Northern Ireland Office

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The negotiations which started on 10 June are to secure an overall political settlement and will address all the issues relevant to that. ✓

Clear and firm guidance at government level is critical to a real prospect of resolving the problem. That is our responsibility. We are wholly committed to upholding that responsibility. ✓

The primary interest is to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement among all the people who inhabit the island of Ireland. Accordingly, with a view to achieving that agreement all relevant constitutional, political, social, economic and cultural matters will be addressed. ✓

An accommodation of the diversity of views and aspirations on these matters mean achieving agreement on the basis of equality of treatment and parity of esteem. ✓

The prospects for success in these negotiations will be greatly enhanced if they are conducted in a peaceful environment. Beyond that the two governments are agreed that these negotiations will be without preconditions. ✓

It is equally clear that to be successful the negotiations must be peaceful, based on exclusively democratic and peaceful means and without recourse to the threat or use of violence or coercion. ✓

The effort to achieve a successful accommodation means that the negotiations must be inclusive, involving both governments and all the relevant political parties with the necessary democratic mandate and commitment. ✓

The spectrum of issues on which an overall agreement is dependent means that the agenda for negotiations must be comprehensive, with all issues on the table ensuring a fair hearing for the concerns of all the participants. No outcome will be excluded or predetermined in advance. ✓

The governments' responsibilities and commitments are clear. So too the responsibilities of all the participants. All must approach the negotiations in good faith, with all parties seriously addressing all aspects of the agreed agenda and making every effort to reach agreement, and the two governments, for their part, committed to ensure that a comprehensive agenda is addressed and that any obstacles which may arise are overcome. ✓

The governments are determined to see these negotiations through successfully. In this we are at one with the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of Britain and Ireland. In large part this has sustained a momentum in a process which will always have its difficulties. These hopes and aspirations will bear fruit in a negotiation process that is conducted within a calendar which ensures that momentum is built up and sustained. The two governments are committed to an agreed timeframe for the conduct of the negotiations. ✓

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The agenda for the negotiations is open. Participants can raise any issue. No party can exercise a veto over the process. All parties will be treated equally in the negotiations and no party will have an undemocratic advantage.

The negotiations will address with all other issues, the International Body's proposals on decommissioning, without making this a precondition to further progress in the negotiations.

We are committed to raising confidence through the talks process and through a range of other measures including, as appropriate or required, policy and legislative measures. The International Body's report itself proposes a process of mutual confidence building.

The government is committed to an equality agenda and discipline in relation to all relevant political, social, economic and cultural issues. In particular we are committed to addressing issues which arise out of the divisions among the people who inhabit the island of Ireland and which result in or from the conflict.

These measures will include urgent action on the issues of conflict related prisoners and legislation; the administration of justice, a policing service and policing methods, which would enjoy widespread acceptability.

They will ensure equality of treatment for the Irish language and culture.

They will also address and resolve the issues involved in equality of opportunity in the economic matters including equality in economic development, the empowerment and inclusion of deprived communities, the imbalance in the unemployment ratio and the subsequent greater and more equally shared prosperity which all of this enables.

The opportunity to resolve the conflict in Ireland has never been greater. This is universally recognised. Accordingly we welcome the contribution of the European Union to the resolution of the problem. Likewise we welcome the interest and involvement of the United States arising from the special affinity shared between all the peoples of these islands and people in the United States. In particular we welcome the contribution of areas of successful conflict resolution such as South Africa.

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