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From: JOHN HOLMES
Date: 30 September 1996

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND

✓ Nothing is ever
at it again yet 11/1.
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Hume has not yet come back to us with a considered response to the letter and text you sent him, but he saw Adams this evening. He expects Adams' definitive response a week today. He claimed Adams was "fairly positive" but would probably like improvements in a couple of areas. He also again urged us not to publish until we are sure what the Sinn Fein/IRA reaction would be. I repeated yet again that we were not negotiating on the text or the timing.

Meanwhile, developments elsewhere are not helpful. Trimble gave us this morning, and subsequently published, a UUP paper on decommissioning. I ... attach a copy. Much of it is OK but the real problem comes at the end, with the insistence that the UUP will not sit down with Sinn Fein until actual || decommissioning has begun. They also appear to be demanding that the real negotiations cannot start, even if Sinn Fein are not there, unless their approach to decommissioning is agreed first.

The UUP paper is not well thought out and is inconsistent in various respects. || For example it talks about commitment to Mitchell's proposals on parallel decommissioning, but then goes beyond them. The proposed treatment of Sinn Fein is also different from what has happened over the Loyalists. But its main significance is that Trimble does not feel strong enough to take on his own enemies within the UUP, as well as the DUP and UKUP. He has therefore decided to run for cover. This does not bode well.

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The publication of the UUP paper has nevertheless not been as big a story here as I would have expected. And the Irish Government and SDLP reactions so far are more of resignation than the immediate threats to walk out from the talks I had feared. The lesson may be that the fear of being seen to wreck the talks is still stronger than anything else. Trimble himself has told us that he remains prepared to talk about decommissioning and that his paper is not necessary the last word.

The next step is a discussion on decommissioning in plenary tomorrow. All views will therefore be aired in public. (We will stick to the proposal we made to the UUP, which has now been given to the other parties too.) Plenary debate will be followed by adjournment next week, to allow both for the Party Conference and for more bilateral contacts on whether something can be salvaged in decommissioning. The process therefore looks like grinding on for the moment.

Two other possibly related bits of news:

- i. A car bomb in Belfast was defused overnight and subsequently claimed by the military wing of the Republican Sinn Fein, who blew up the hotel in Enniskillen just after Drumcree. They are separate from PIRA, but there are links between the two at lower level and there are always suspicions about the degree of PIRA complicity in such events.
- ii. Loyalist prisoners in the Maze have apparently said that they are withdrawing their support for the peace process. The exact implications are not yet clear but this is worrying when the Loyalist ceasefire is so fragile. The NIO believe the prisoners'

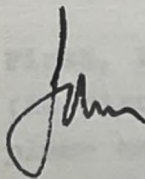
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statement is related more to their frustration over their failure to achieve a relaxation of prison conditions than to the latest evidence of Republican readiness for violence. I hope they are right.

All this makes for a messy picture. I think we must wait for the mists to clear a little before we contemplate going ahead with publication of the text we have sent to Hume. But we will have to make up our minds before too long about whether we are going to do anything this week. Presumably Thursday or Friday would be the last possible days for publication, given the Party Conference.

There is a strong case for leaving publication until the week after the Conference, but the risk of uncontrolled leaks is obviously increasing all the time. The balance will need to be weighed again on Wednesday at the latest.



JOHN HOLMES

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Press***ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY****ADDRESSING DECOMMISSIONING**

On 28 February 1996 the Government, when launching the Forum and the talks, made it clear that the parties would have to make a commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence in the Report of the International Body, which include a commitment to the total disarmament of paramilitary organisations. It was clearly stated that this commitment was to be given "at the beginning" of the talks and "at that stage" the parties would have to address the International Body's proposals for decommissioning.

This paper contains the matters which the Ulster Unionist Party believes must be part of the process of addressing decommissioning.

1. Essential principles

First, before entry into substantive political negotiations (ie "launching the three strands"), structures should be in place and methodology outlined which would provide the basis for actual decommissioning.

Secondly, no additional participant will be admitted to substantive political negotiations before they have adequately demonstrated their commitment to peace.

2. Immediate Governmental action

Concurrently the United Kingdom and Irish governments should implement their obligations. They should publish and enact the necessary enabling legislation as soon as possible. In advance of the enactment of the legislation, a core Verification Commission designate should be established. This could consist of the Chairman designate, ideally some other Commissioners designate, and some support staff. They could begin preliminary work assisted by experts, some of whom may be seconded from the Governments. The Ulster Unionist party must to be consulted with regard to the appointment of Commissioners and other senior staff.

Draft decommissioning schemes should be published as soon as possible and no later than the Committee stage of the enabling legislation.

Action in Talks

There will be a debate in the opening plenary session on decommissioning. To avoid the time that would be lost in a complicated series of bilaterals, participants could make written submissions before the debate. This would also avoid the need at that stage to create a committee of plenary which would cause undue delay. This phase might take one or two weeks.

At the conclusion of the above debate all participants will make a solemn commitment to implement the principle of disarmament and the proposals of the International Body on decommissioning.

This must be accompanied by an agreement containing the following elements,

(a) an undertaking to nominate the Core Verification Commission immediately and to ratify it as a Commission proper within a specified period after the enactment of the necessary legislation,

(b) firm indications should be given on

(i) the timescale for the enactment of the necessary enabling legislation,

(ii) the ratification of the Verification Commission proper,

(iii) the finalisation of the decommissioning schemes, although the details may have to be fine-tuned later when actual decommissioning is about to commence,

(iv) the procedures to be followed if and when another paramilitary related party endeavours to enter the talks, and when, upon the entry of all the paramilitary related parties to the talks, the first actual mutual decommissioning should take place (see section 5), and

(v) the manner in which actual decommissioning would continue alongside negotiations; the negotiations and decommissioning proceeding independently of each other - there being no question of weapons for concessions,

(c) agreement on the sanctions for any breach of either above commitments or any of the above timeframes and against any participant who seeks to obstruct the implementation of decommissioning.

It is envisaged that there would be relative short timeframes for the above and it should be made clear the above commitments would not be re-negotiable on the subsequent entry of other parties to the talks.

On the establishment of the Verification Commission proper a committee of plenary would be created to liaise between plenary and that Commission.

4. Launch of "three stranded" negotiations

Depending on the quality of the above commitments on the part of the British and the Irish Governments it is possible that the three stranded negotiations could be commenced with the present parties to the talks prior to the enactment of the enabling legislation.

5. Conditions of entry of Sinn Fein/IRA

Sinn Fein/IRA must completely and unequivocally end its terrorist campaign. This will require more than a mere restoration of the ambivalent 1994 cease-fire for there can now be no question of their entry to the process on the basis of that fraudulent cease-fire or any other ambiguous formula.

The credibility of any cease-fire will largely depend on whether the actions of the paramilitaries concerned are consistent with an ending of terrorism for good. The continuation of paramilitary recruitment, training, targeting and social or economic terrorism would be incompatible with a genuine ending of the terrorist campaign.

In the event of a genuine cease-fire Sinn Fein would not move immediately into substantive political negotiations with the other parties. Initially entry into the talks will involve for Sinn Fein a session in which they would have to accept the agreements made by the other participants in the

opening plenary session. It would not be necessary for other parties to participate. The Ulster Unionist party does not intend to participate with Sinn Fein until they have complied with the following paragraph including the beginning of actual decommissioning.

This session will involve a catching up process involving,

- (i) signing up to the principles of democracy and non-violence,
- (ii) acceptance of the Rules of Procedure,
- (iii) an undertaking to implement the commitment to decommission in accordance with the agreements in the opening plenary session (see 3b).

Item (iii) will provide for the first and subsequent instalments of mutual decommissioning by the paramilitaries; that first instalment to be within the ambit of the catching up process, ie before the entry of Sinn Fein into substantive negotiations as the Ulster Unionist Party will not enter into negotiations with Sinn Fein until they have demonstrated their commitment to exclusively peaceful means.

we were not negotiating on it. They understood why we said that. But they just had a few points to suggest, in a helpful spirit. They did not believe any of them would do violence to the thrust or balance of the text. Their suggestions were:

- (i) decommissioning: delete the sentence in the third paragraph of page 2 beginning "This includes its compromise approach". The Irish had no difficulty with the substance, but initially they thought this did not help the text. It was not in the joint proposal which had been given to the UUP, though much of the other language was. Sinn Fein had to be brought along slowly on decommissioning. They could not sign up to parallel decommissioning up front but might be induced to consent if once the talks started in earnest.

- (ii) put in a reference somewhere to the three strands, which were otherwise conspicuous by their absence, eg "within the three strands..." at the end of the second sentence of the second paragraph;