

File
M 279

From: JOHN HOLMES
Date: 25 September 1996

cc Jonathan Haslam

PRIME MINISTER

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

Pl. as for or. text /
Timing / colleagues / 26.9.

✓ As I mentioned to you, Paddy Mayhew briefed Trimble (alone) last night, taking him through the background and the areas where we had been asked to clarify our policy. He emphasised that there had been no deals and no direct contact with Sinn Fein, that we were sceptical about the approaches and the chance of success, but anxious not to be seen to spurn any possibility of a new ceasefire.

✓ Trimble was relaxed about the approaches and the Government's planned response (although he did not see the text).

... The way is now therefore clear for you to respond to Hume. The letter for signature and the agreed text are attached.

Some difficult questions remain:

- ✓ (i) when to respond to Hume? I see no reason not to go ahead straightaway;
- (ii) when to publish the text? The NIO view is that we should do so in the middle of next week, to allow a reasonable interval to elapse

for Hume, but not so long that the rats can get at the text. I think we could publish earlier, perhaps Sunday or Monday. One consideration is to steer well clear of the TPC;

(iii) how to publish? Various options are possible:

- a speech by you or Paddy: no opportunity for you. If Paddy were making HMG's opening statement in the talks plenary, that would be ideal, but the timing of this is uncertain and almost certainly too late;
- a Government statement, put out at the talks in Belfast. This has some attractions. The text is in Government statement language. But the NIO are worried that the press would cherry-pick the text, with the full version published nowhere;
- a press article: this is what the NIO recommend, signed by you (although Paddy would happily do it if you preferred not to). This could be in one of the Sundays eg. Sunday Telegraph, a British newspaper on Monday eg. The Times or perhaps the Belfast Telegraph.

JOHN HOLMES

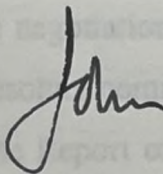
Just 1 On balance a press article signed by you is probably best. But this immediately raises the question of the language of the statement. It is manifestly not in your words. I believe, and the NIO agree, that it can be turned into your language without changing the substance. We can do this quickly tomorrow morning, and send this to Hume, or simply warn Hume that the text he has could be turned into more user-friendly language. The former seems preferable.

We would also need to add a preamble explaining why the article was being published (because we had received a number of approaches asking us to set out policy on the key issues to do with the talks, including what Sinn Fein needs to do to join the negotiations in the light of press speculation about a ceasefire).

• • • Meanwhile I attach the NIO information plan. This seems very much on the right lines.

Content

- ✓ to reply to Hume on 26 September?
- to publish the text early next week?
- to do so in an article signed by you, in user-friendly words?
(Jonathan and I will deliberate further on the right newspaper.)
- with the broad lines of the NIO information plan?



JOHN HOLMES

25 September 1996

fipaddy.slh

1. The negotiations which started on 10 June are to secure an overall political settlement, achieved through agreement and founded on consent. They will address all the issues relevant to that. They are intended to be inclusive, involving both Governments and all the relevant political parties with the necessary democratic mandate and commitment to exclusively peaceful methods.
2. The prospects for success in these negotiations will be greatly enhanced if they are conducted in a peaceful environment. Under the relevant legislation, if the Government considers that there is an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994, Sinn Fein will be invited to nominate a team to participate in the negotiations. Beyond that, the two Governments are agreed that these negotiations are without preconditions.
3. 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 (actual or implied) or use of violence or coercion. On entry to the negotiations, each participant needs therefore to make clear their total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the Report of the International Body.
4. The spectrum of issues on which an overall agreement is dependent means that the negotiations will be on the basis of a comprehensive agenda, adopted by agreement, with each participant able to raise any significant issue of concern to them, and able to receive a fair hearing for those concerns, without their ability to do so being subject to the veto of any other party in the negotiations. Any participant in the format in question will be free to raise any aspect of the three relationships, including constitutional issues and any other

matter which it considers relevant. No negotiated outcome is either predetermined or excluded in advance or limited by anything other than the need for agreement.

5. As the communiqué of 28 February made clear, the opening plenary will also address the International Body's proposals on decommissioning. At that stage, the Government, along with the Irish Government, will be seeking the commitment of all participants to work constructively during the negotiations to implement all aspects of the International Body's report, including its compromise approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of negotiations. The Government wishes to make urgent progress in this area so that the process of decommissioning, rather than being regarded as a precondition to further progress, is used to build confidence one step at a time during the negotiations. As progress is made on political issues, even modest mutual steps on decommissioning could help create the atmosphere needed for further steps in a progressive pattern of mounting trust and confidence.

6. All parties are treated equally in the negotiations in accordance with the scale of their democratic mandate. No party has an undemocratic advantage. The negotiations will operate on the basis of consensus, requiring at least the support of parties representing a majority of both the unionist and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland respectively. But no one party by withdrawing from the negotiations can prevent them proceeding.

7. It has been accepted that all participants will negotiate in good faith, seriously address all aspects of the agreed agenda and make every effort to reach a comprehensive agreement. For their part, the two Governments are committed to ensure that all items on the comprehensive agenda are fully

addressed and to do so themselves with a view to overcoming any obstacles which may arise.

These included changed arrangements for release of prisoners in

8. The British Government is wholly committed to upholding, so far as we are able, our responsibility to encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of agreement in the negotiations based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions. We want to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement.

13. Confidence building is a two-way street. Support for the use of violence

9. The Government, for our part, is determined to see these negotiations through successfully, as speedily as possible. This is at one with the hopes and aspirations of people in both the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic, which have already sustained a momentum in a process which will always have its difficulties. The Government has already proposed that a meeting of the plenary should be held at a suitable date to take stock of progress in the negotiations as a whole. It will support any agreed timeframe for the conduct of the negotiations adopted by the participants.

support of people throughout these islands, who also greatly desire that they

10. We are committed to raising confidence through the talks process and through a range of other measures alongside it. The International Body's report itself proposes a process of mutual confidence-building.

11. The Government will continue to pursue social and economic policies informed by the principles of equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and parity of esteem irrespective of political, cultural or religious affiliation or gender. We are committed to enhancing community identification with policing in Northern Ireland.

12. In response to the ceasefires of Autumn 1994, the Government undertook a series of confidence-building measures in response to the changed level of threat. These included changed arrangements for release of prisoners in Northern Ireland under the Northern Ireland (Remission of Sentences) Act 1996, security force redeployments, a review of emergency legislation and others. If the threat reduces again, the opportunity for further confidence-building measures returns.

13. Confidence-building is a two-way street. Support for the use of violence is incompatible with participation in the democratic process. An end to punishment beatings and other paramilitary activities, including surveillance and targeting, would demonstrate a commitment to peaceful methods and help build trust.

14. The opportunity for progress has never been greater. The negotiations command wide support internationally and have the benefit of independent chairmen from the USA, Canada and Finland. They have the overwhelming support of people throughout these islands, who also greatly desire that they take place in a peaceful environment, free of all paramilitary violence.