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From: John Holmes

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MR CAMPBELL

cc: Jonathan Powell  
Philip Barton

## BRUTON VISIT

We spoke about presentation. When Mo Mowlam met Spring last night, the Irish pressed very hard for us to agree language which suggested Sinn Fein could enter talks immediately if they declared a ceasefire, or at least on 3 June. They were told firmly that this was not on, and that there was going to be no joint press conference. They (reluctantly) seemed to accept this.

But, as we discussed, Bruton has not exactly kept quiet, and presentation after the meeting will not be easy. We should avoid any joint statement, but try to agree broad lines to take, even if this will not stop either side spinning things their way. As I said, there is plenty of positive stuff we can say:

- Warmth of meeting. Determination to work closely together.
- Common condemnation of violence from all quarters, including recent IRA attacks in Britain, and of recent appalling Sectarian attacks in Northern Ireland (burning churches etc).
- Common determination to make speedy progress at the talks when they resume on 3 June.
- Desire to see these talks become inclusive through Sinn Fein joining.



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- But absolutely clear they cannot do so until there is a credible ("unequivocal") ceasefire, adhered to in word and deed.
- Determination to do everything possible to avert trouble in this summer's marching season. Support for Parades Commission.

The difficult question is the timetable for Sinn Fein after a ceasefire. The Government is bound by Statute to let Sinn Fein into the talks if they declare an unequivocal ceasefire, establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and show they abide by the democratic process. In practice, there is obviously a significant degree of subjective judgement about this. But the law does mean we cannot say absolutely and definitively that Sinn Fein will not be invited to the talks on 3 June if they declare a ceasefire now. If the IRA all came out with their hands up, it presumably would be possible.

But we can make clear that, short of this, the Government would need time to verify that a ceasefire was indeed genuine in word and deed, so that entry on 3 June, even if a ceasefire were declared now (itself highly unlikely), is extremely unlikely. How much time? Can't say but we would not be looking for unnecessary delay. Are you prepared to fix a date in future? Hypothetical question. New government, just getting in touch with the parties. Priority is for IRA to declare a ceasefire.

You may like to talk this through further.

JOHN HOLMES

