

CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AASUBJECT
MASTER

Filed on:

File
JP
bc AC
PS

From the Private Secretary

19 June 1997

*Dear Her,***MEETING WITH JOHN HUME, 19 JUNE 1997**

John Hume called on the Prime Minister this morning for 25 minutes. He was alone. Dr. Mowlam, Jonathan Powell and I were there on our side.

The Prime Minister began by asking how Hume saw the next moves. Did we now have to go on building from the centre? Hume said that this might be so, but he was meeting Adams privately later today. He knew exactly what had been put to Sinn Fein by the British Government, and took a very positive view of this. Its content was the same as the 10 October paper. He believed, because he had not been able to get hold of Adams during the week, that Adams was meeting the IRA secretly and trying to get their agreement to our paper. He urged the Prime Minister not to make any statement until he had heard Adams' response, which he would convey to us immediately by telephone.

Hume continued that his advice to Adams would be that the paper had exactly what Sinn Fein had been looking for, and that there should therefore be a total end to the IRA campaign. He had always been worried about an IRA atrocity in the period while Sinn Fein had to go round all their individual senior members to make sure there would be no splits. He knew the nature of the organisation. Until violence was declared to be at an end, the individual cells would keep on working. He had also been struck by the fact that the Lurgan killings had been claimed specifically by the North Armagh branch of the IRA. This was unusual and might suggest that a splinter group was at work, signalling that it would not accept a ceasefire. Alternatively, as he had already suggested, this had been planned for some time, and the grassroots cells simply kept on going until they were told to stop.

The Prime Minister said that he was concerned that the Unionists should not think that we had been involved in negotiations with Sinn Fein and in underhand dealings. We did not want the Unionists to think that we had been going behind their backs. That was why we were contemplating saying something in public.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

Hume repeated that he saw no need for a statement, and dangers in going ahead. The Prime Minister's reply to Ken Maginnis in the House the previous day had said all that needed to be said. In any case, the Unionists did not really want the IRA to stop their violence. IRA violence made life easy for the Unionists.

The Prime Minister asked whether, if Sinn Fein replied that they were not prepared to end the violence on the basis set out, Hume would be prepared to say that the talks had to go ahead rapidly with Sinn Fein outside? Would he be prepared to do business with Trimble on this basis? Hume protested that he had always been prepared to talk to Trimble and to move the talks on without Sinn Fein. The Prime Minister said that this time he was asking for a different scale of commitment. Dr. Mowlam asked whether Hume was prepared to focus on the talks, or would he want to press for inclusivity first?

Hume reacted angrily. He had never been more interested in inclusivity. He had always wanted to use the talks process constructively. The Prime Minister repeated his question. If the IRA refused the offer, would Hume be prepared to say publicly that the talks had to be pushed on rapidly without them? If Hume would say that clearly and publicly it could make a big difference.

Hume said that he saw no problem with that. In any case, we ought to know the Sinn Fein response today, so there was no need for a Government Statement today. He did not know what Adams would say. He could of course say that it was broadly satisfactory, but some adjustments were needed. Dr. Mowlam said that there was no question of negotiating on what we had given Sinn Fein. Hume said that if Adams came back and said a bit more was needed, this should not simply be turned down. In any case we should wait to see what Adams said.

The Prime Minister said that he simply wanted to know whether Sinn Fein were going to be in the process or out of it. The situation would be clearer if people knew what Sinn Fein had been given. That was what he would intend to set out in a statement. He was worried that Sinn Fein's response might be unclear.

Hume said that we should wait and see. If their response was unsatisfactory, he would be prepared to make clear that the process had to go on without them. The Prime Minister asked whether Hume would be prepared to say that very clearly next week. Hume said yes, but went back to arguing that he had not in any case been holding up the talks without Sinn Fein. He repeated once more that there was no need for us to say anything now, and no expectation that we would do so. He thought there could be a positive reply from Sinn Fein, in which case the violence would be over. Even if the reply was less than totally positive, he thought it could be resolved within a few days.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

The Prime Minister said that, after the killings of Monday, something more was needed. He had to have something which showed real signs that the violence was over. Hume brushed this aside. We could simply say that the ceasefire was there, and now the words and deeds must really demonstrate good intentions. He would tell Adams very strongly that, if the violence was not going to stop, he would come out very clearly in favour of going on without them. HMG was in a very strong position if the violence did not stop. The paper we had given Sinn Fein was perfect.

The Prime Minister concluded that he would reflect further on what had been said.

The meeting had to end at this point because of Cabinet. Hume was taken out through a side door, and I hope said nothing to the media. He promised that he would telephone me immediately after his meeting with Adams, i.e. around 6.30 p.m. our time.

Comment

Hume's line was entirely predictable. Although he said that he would be ready to move on without Sinn Fein if there were no ceasefire, his whole approach continues to suggest that he will not give up trying to bring them in, and will therefore not deal seriously without them. Nevertheless, his plea against a statement made it more difficult to make one in advance of his meeting with Adams.

I am copying this letter to William Ehrman (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir John Kerr (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).


JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

CONFIDENTIAL