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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

9 October 1996

Dear Ken,

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

John Hume called me again this morning. He said that he had been in touch further with Sinn Fein, and was now expecting a response from them soon, perhaps even tomorrow.

I said that I did not see how we could be expected to take this exercise seriously in the light of what had happened on Monday. Talk of a ceasefire in present circumstances had no credibility with us.

Hume said that he understood. But he remained optimistic, despite everything. There had always been a strain in republican thinking that they should make clear they were not surrendering. The attack on the Lisburn barracks could be seen in that light. I said that I found it hard to believe that the IRA were now in the business of a spectacular before a ceasefire. But even if they were, we had warned time and time again that any ceasefire in these circumstances could have no credibility. Hume commented that he was not looking for a temporary ceasefire but a permanent cessation. I said that that was what we wanted too, but I had seen no evidence to suggest that any such thing was on offer.

Hume said that he did not know what Sinn Fein's response would be, but Adams and other leaders had disappeared for the moment, and he believed there was now an intense debate going on within the ranks of the IRA about the right strategy.

Hume concluded that he would stay in touch. I made clear again that we would of course look at whatever Sinn Fein came back with, but any belief we might have had in this exercise could hardly exist following Monday's attack.

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Comment

The exchange was friendlier than the above account might suggest, but I did not want Hume to be under any illusion that we could simply pretend that Monday's attack had not happened, without closing the door on the exercise altogether.

I am copying this letter to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

Dear Ken

Yours ever

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH DAVID TRIMBLE MP

The Prime Minister met David Trimble for about sixty minutes in the margin of the Conservative Party Conference at Bournemouth today. Mr Trimble appeared initially somewhat nervous, but relaxed and became more thoughtful as the conversation progressed.

The Prime Minister said **JOHN HOLMES** how to react to the PIRA bombs in Ladbarn on Monday. He would be discussing this further with the relevant Ministers next week, and would be looking for advice from the Police and Army about stepping up security. This would also be the right moment to launch a propaganda offensive against Sinn Fein, particularly in the US; he would be helpful if Mr Trimble went to the US to do interviews and Northern Ireland Office

On the political process, the Prime Minister thought it was inconceivable that Sinn Fein could join the talks, probably this side of the General Election, unless against expectations they now came up with a really credible ceasefire. It was unclear at present what the SDLP's reaction would be, and whether they would be willing to continue with the talks even if Sinn Fein were excluded. PIRA's return to violence also meant that the approach to decommissioning needed to be re-considered. We wanted to maintain the Loyalist ceasefire and keep them in the talks. But it was not credible that they would start decommissioning while PIRA resumed violence. "That's right" said Trimble. In general, we needed to maintain an even handed approach to the talks, even if the Irish and US Governments were to feel they were out-sided, that would only help Sinn Fein.