

14. Oct. 1996 16:34  
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CC EO  
JH

FROM: R LEMON  
PS/MICHAEL ANCRAM  
14 OCTOBER 1996

DESK IMMEDIATE

*File*  
*JH 16/10*

cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L)	-B
PS/Michael Ancram	-B
PS/PUS (B&L)	-B
PS/Sir David Fell	-B
Mr Thomas (B&L)	-B
Mr Steele	-B
Mr Ray	-B
Mr Bell	-B
Mr Leach	-B
Mr Watkins	-B
Mr Stephens	-N
Mr Hill (B&L)	-B
Mr Perry	-B
Mr Maccabe	-B
Mr Beeton	-B
Mr Lavery	-B
Mr Whysall	-B
Mr Holmes, No 10	

PS/Secretary of State (B&L)

MICHAEL ANCRAM'S NOTE OF A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN HUME IN CASTLE BUILDINGS, 14 OCTOBER 1996.

1. John Hume came to see Michael Ancram privately in Castle Buildings on 14 October and asked to see him alone. The following is the Minister's record of that meeting. The Minister would be grateful if copy recipients could protect this information.

2. "John Hume came to see me at 2.50pm on the afternoon of Monday 14 October. He had just spoken to John Holmes and was very anxious as he had gathered that the language used suggested that the Hume/Adams Initiative was being put on the back burner. He therefore came to see me to try and emphasise how important it was that this was not delayed, and how he was convinced that if the language proposed was found acceptable this would be sufficient to achieve a lasting ceasefire. When pressed he said that he was confident that such a ceasefire would be permanent.

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3. When challenged he claimed that he believed that Adams is totally committed to achieving peace, is totally committed to achieving a permanent ceasefire, wishes to come into the current talks process, accepts in terms of the text under consideration that an agreement will now form an essential part of the process, and that what will be achieved at the end is a negotiated and agreed settlement with no predetermined movement towards a United Ireland. Hume told me that this was an enormous step forward by Sinn Fein and the IRA from where they were last year and we should recognise that.

4. I listened to him and then pointed out that the atmosphere had changed some what dramatically since the bomb last week. He interjected that this showed a misunderstanding of the way that Irish politics worked. I said rather sharply that just as he had complained about the perceptions which arose after Drumcree in the summer equally he should understand that the British public, the Unionist population and the British Government regarded the events at Thiepval last week as a straight negation and rejection of the assertions of peaceful intent being made by people like Gerry Adams and that in this atmosphere it was difficult to have confidence in the sort of assertions that he was making.

5. He gave me once again the usual mantra about the IRA wishing to sue for peace from a position of perceived strength in their own ranks and again I challenged his justification for making this assertion rather than adopting the more credible interpretation that the IRA was still intent on using violence in pursuit of political aims. He again told me that he believed that our failure to produce talks in the 18 months of the ceasefire had led to the present situation but that Gerry Adams was still totally committed to achieving a peaceful solution through negotiation. I felt that it was important in view of his body language to challenge his assertions and I rehearsed the circumstances of the 18 months of the ceasefire and why it had not

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been possible to achieve talks when Sinn Fein and the IRA were not able to produce the evidence of peaceful intent which would have created the confidence to allow such talks to be attended by all parties. He, for his part, asserted that the Unionist Wing of the Conservative Party was the hindrance, to which I replied that the policy we have been pursued was one which all those of us involved in Northern Ireland's affairs were totally committed.

He then returned to the question of the Hume/Adams document. He said he hoped that the language would now be acceptable because he and his interlocuter had tried to adopt British language which had been used by the Prime Minister and others in past. He stated without prompting that he had told Adams that the language he should have suggested in relation to the police force was "development of" a new police force rather than the language which has been preferred. He was anxious that John Holmes had told him that there could be no progress before the end of the week. I told him that we had received his amended text, and we would now be looking at it but that this was a matter of importance made considerably less easy in terms of credibility by the events of last week and that due time would need to be taken not least because of the Prime Minister's own personal involvement and the interests of colleagues in Government. He left looking somewhat downcast saying that he hoped we would not take too long over it as he believed that this was the way which could move the process forward avoiding the sort of incidents we had seen last week and leading to inclusive talks. He believed that the time frame of the window of opportunity was short".

(Signed)

R LEMON

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