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Mr Steele  
Mr Ray  
Mr Bell  
Mr Leach  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Stephens  
Mr Hill  
Mr Perry  
Mr Maccabe  
Mr Beeton  
Mr Lavery  
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2712

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE (B)

42/006

From: John Holmes  
To: Peter Lindsay  
Subject: Hume/Adams Initiative  
Date: 21/10/96

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10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

21 October 1996

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Dear Gen,

## HUME/ADAMS' INITIATIVE

Following his conversation with Michael Ancram on 19 October, John Hume rang me again this afternoon from Strasbourg. His ostensible purpose was to say that he had "forgotten" to tell Michael one thing: Adams had assured him that, if there was a new ceasefire, Sinn Fein would make a statement setting out their total and unequivocal commitment to the Mitchell principles. But he went on to rehearse again the reasons why he believed a ceasefire was genuinely on offer. Adams had long made it clear that he did not want the last twenty-five years of violence to continue and ruin his children's lives. Hume was personally convinced that this was genuine - all his experience and his contacts in the nationalist community indicated to him that it was. We should also take seriously the reference, in the IRA statement claiming responsibility for Lisburn, to support for a negotiated settlement. This was a fundamental point, light years away from "Brits out".

I said that our doubts remained. Those concerned appeared to want to retain the option of violence. In these circumstances, how could a new ceasefire be regarded as more than another tactical manoeuvre? Hume's response was twofold: Adams and his supporters did want to stop violence for good; and in any case, a ceasefire was a ceasefire. The 18 months of the last ceasefire had been a great achievement and saved many lives. If the present leadership of Adams and co. failed to make progress towards a negotiated settlement, they would be supplanted by a younger generation not concerned at the prospect of 25 more years of violence - there was no doubt that there were people in the ranks who wanted to continue violence. That was why it was so important to take the latest opportunity.

Hume went on to say that, if it would help, he was ready to send a letter to the Prime Minister explaining his conviction that Adams wanted to stop the violence for good, and taking upon himself the entire responsibility if we made the sort of declaration required and a lasting ceasefire did not follow. I said

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- 2 -

this was an interesting idea on which I would like to reflect, and come back to him. I also said that I would revert shortly on timing for a meeting with the Prime Minister. (On present plans, Hume will not be back from Strasbourg until late Thursday evening, following the vote on EU money for Northern Ireland).

**Comment**

Most of this conversation covered familiar ground but Hume's letter idea may be worth considering, even if it is difficult to see what effect it would have in practice. I will revert to this when Irish and American reactions to our wider ideas are clearer.

I am copying this to William Ehrman (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever*  
*John*

**JOHN HOLMES**

Ken Lindsay Esq  
Northern Ireland Office

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