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THE PRIME MINISTER

29 November 1996

Thank you for your letter of 28 November following our telephone conversation.

I know it was difficult for you to accept that we had no choice but to publish yesterday the text we had sent to John Hume. But we had - none. As you will have seen, as far as I could, I took account of the language you suggested to me. Even without that, my intention was to make clear that publication of the text, far from closing doors, was expressly designed to leave them open. I emphasised that in everything I said, and I think that came across, at least in the British media.

Naturally I agree that our two governments must work together and I hope in your briefing you will emphasise that. Certainly I have always tried to achieve it - often with much domestic difficulty. But I do not accept that we should not set out our position publicly, as we had been asked to do right from the start. I do not want people to be under any mis-apprehension about our position. Nor do I accept that setting out our position can be seen as a step which could seriously imperil Anglo-Irish relations. This kind of approach to us is seriously counter-productive as I cannot cooperate with you, as I wish, under duress.

I nevertheless acknowledge the tone of the Irish Government statement issued after we published the text. This creates a basis on which we can go on working together to achieve a lasting peace.

I look forward to seeing you here on 9 December, if not in Lisbon.

James Pigeon
John

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JOHN HOLMES

KEN LINDSAY

31 OCT / ADAMS

28 NOVEMBER 1996

Mr John Bruton, T.D.