

51/023

FROM: MRS J MAPSTONE  
IPL DIVISION  
26 NOVEMBER 1996

DESK IMMEDIATE

cc PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B  
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B  
PS/Baroness Denton - B  
PS/PUS (L&B) - B  
PS/Sir David Fell - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Thomas (L&B) - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Leach - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Wood (L&B) - B  
Mr Stephens - B  
Mr Cornick - B  
Mr Hill (L&B) - B  
Mr Maccabe - B  
Mr Perry - B  
Mr Westmacott \*  
HMA Dublin - B  
Miss Jude - B  
Mr Brearley - B  
Ms Bharucha - B  
Mr Maye - B  
Ms Collins, Cabinet Office \*  
Mr Lamont, RID - B  
Mr Campbell Bannerman - B

\* via IPL

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE - B

**PUBLICATION OF HUME/ADAMS: BRIEFING**

I attach bull-point briefing on the key messages and defensive lines to take for the publication of the Hume-Adams text. This updates and expands the contingency briefing provided on 1 November. Also included are Q and A material on the detail of the statement, and lines to take on the 10 October text passed to us by John Hume, to be used in the event of Sinn Fein publishing this text.

Signed

MRS J MAPSTONE  
IPL DIVISION  
26 NOVEMBER 1996

PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT (HUME/ADAMS): BRIEFING FOR PUBLICATION

Key Messages:

- we have received a number of approaches from both unionists and nationalists, asking us to make clear our position on the nature of the negotiations and what Sinn Fein needs to do to get in;
- the statement reiterates our position on a number of key points. We thought it would be useful to set these out again now to ensure they are clearly understood by everyone;
- our position as described here is established policy and has been known and in the public domain for some time. But if, by repeating our position, greater clarity and reassurance is provided, then the exercise is worthwhile;
- there have been no secret deals, no negotiations over a ceasefire, and no meetings with Sinn Fein;
- our position on Sinn Fein entry to talks remains the same: Sinn Fein may only enter talks after an unequivocal IRA ceasefire. This has been our policy since the breakdown of the ceasefire and is set out in legislation;
- our position, as people will see from this text, is fair and reasonable. There is no reason why the IRA ceasefire should not be restored unequivocally. There was no reason for it to end in the first place. It is now up to the IRA to deliver what the people of Northern Ireland overwhelmingly wish for;
- an IRA ceasefire, if it is genuinely unequivocal, would clearly be welcomed by the Government, and indeed by everyone with an interest in peace and democracy in Northern Ireland;
- we of course very much hope that a ceasefire is forthcoming, and that if there were a ceasefire it will be genuinely unequivocal. Violence or the threat of violence when an inclusive democratic



process of negotiation is on offer is morally unjustified, and completely counter-productive.

- if there were to be a new ceasefire, we would need to take great care to assess whether it was indeed unequivocal. In making this assessment, account would have to be taken of all circumstances, including events on the ground;
- we are not attempting to erect barriers to Sinn Fein's entry; on the contrary, we always wanted an inclusive process to maximise the chances of a widely accepted political accommodation;
- but in the light of violent events since 9 February - Canary Wharf, Manchester, Osnabruck, Thiepval - everyone needs reassurance that Sinn Fein is genuinely wishing to move into peaceful and democratic politics. There must be confidence on this point before the requirements of paragraphs 8 and 9 of Groundrules (Command Paper 3232) are met. These require the Secretary of State to ensure all parties invited to the talks must establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and show they abide by the democratic process.

#### Defensive Briefing

- this statement does not represent any change in policy. We are not in the business of changing policy in order to bring about a ceasefire which should never have ended in the first place;
- the statement repeats our position on key issues which are in any case already a matter of public record;
- in the light of much recent speculation, the statement clarifies the conditions of entry for Sinn Fein so that there can be no misunderstandings;
- the bomb outrage at Thiepval underlined the need to ensure our position was clearly understood by everyone. Clearly, after this murderous attack, a simple ceasefire declaration would

have no credibility. The IRA must understand that each violent attack serves to widen the credibility gap they then have to cross if they want to come into talks;

- so we have set out a process for their entry in the event of a ceasefire. It is inevitable now that everyone will need reassurance on whether any ceasefire is truly unequivocal and therefore dependable;
- the key to Sinn Fein's entry lies in all indicators - words, deeds and circumstances - being consistent with an unequivocal ceasefire and a commitment to peaceful methods;
- we have contacts with Mr Hume, an important Northern Ireland party leader, on a regular basis and we are always interested in what he has to say;
- the text has been shown before publication to a number of individuals, but this statement is wholly our document; the policies and positions described in it, and the language used, have not been negotiated with anyone.
- I repeat, the statement demonstrates no change to our policy. Unionists have nothing to worry about. They should be reassured by the importance attached to the consent principle and to our demand for an unequivocal IRA ceasefire before Sinn Fein may enter talks.



Q & A related directly to the text of our statement

**How can you say all parties are treated equally in the negotiations (pg1) when there is a separate entry process for Sinn Fein?**

All parties have to show the same commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and to abiding by the democratic process. The other parties have already done this.

Sinn Fein has not demonstrated a commitment to peaceful constitutional politics. Quite the contrary. Hence the process to allow the Secretary of State to determine whether these requirements are met. The terms on which Sinn Fein join the process are the same.

**By a "lasting" ceasefire do you mean permanent (pg 2)?**

They mean the same thing, but we will need to make a judgement from all the relevant indicators - words, deeds and circumstances - whether any ceasefire was likely over time to be lasting.

**How long is "sufficient time" (to judge if ceasefire unequivocal) (pg 2)?**

It is whatever time is needed to make the assessment that the requirements of paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Groundrules paper (Cmnd 2323) are met. These require the Secretary of State before inviting parties to the talks to establish their commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and to abiding by the democratic process.

**Do "meetings with Sinn Fein" (pg 3) mean ministerial meetings?**

That would depend on the circumstances. We have ruled out ministerial meetings while there is no ceasefire, but if an unequivocal ceasefire were in place, we would consider them again.

**What confidence building measures would be discussed at these meetings?**

Confidence building measures apply on both sides and some examples are mentioned in the statement. But we have in mind here the sort of measures Sinn Fein might take to demonstrate quite unequivocally that they no longer supported violence.

**Isn't the mention of a time frame (pgs 3 & 5) adopting Sinn Fein's agenda?**

The statement speaks of the participants agreeing a timeframe, not one imposed by the governments which is what Sinn Fein wanted. Moreover we propose an indicative timeframe, not one which straightjackets the proceedings. We believe this may well provide a helpful structure for the talks without imposing unhelpful restrictions.

**If Sinn Fein joined the talks would everything agreed so far have to be revisited?**

In our view Sinn Fein would have to join the talks at the point they had reached at that time. It is unlikely in our view that the other participants would agree to revisit previous agreements.

**What if Sinn Fein wish to raise the issue of Northern Ireland's constitutional status as part of the UK?**

The statement makes very explicit that "any aspect can be raised, including constitutional issues". It is up to each participant to try and persuade the other participants of the rightness of their view.



For Use if Sinn Fein Publish their Text of 10 October

- this text was passed to us by John Hume in October. Although it reflects much that is our current position, on certain key issues it would have required us to change our policy.
- the key points on which we took issue with this text were:-
  - the conditions of entry to the talks;
  - the different language on decommissioning;
  - a timeframe.

We are not going to change long established and firmly based policy to try to achieve a ceasefire which should never have been ended in the first place.

- this text was passed to us by Mr Hume only 3 days after the bomb outrage at Thiepval Barracks. Murderous attacks of this sort are not likely to persuade anyone that Sinn Fein has peaceful intentions and is ready to join democratic politics;
- IRA activities raise doubts about their sincerity. After Thiepval, people viewed talk of a ceasefire with scepticism;
- we have always been upfront with John Hume. We told him we would not change our policies in an attempt to get a ceasefire.

(Signed)

ANGELA DILLON  
PS/Michael O'Riordan