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Mr Leach
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Mr Hill
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Mr Maccabe
Mr Beeton
Mr Lavery
Ms Mapstone

From :

John Holmes

To:

Robert Crawford

Subject:

Hume/Adams Initiative

Date:

25/11/96

0171 270 0142 DENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA



From the Private Secretary

25 November 1996

Dee Adair,

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

As I mentioned to Michael Ancram on the telephone, Paddy Teahon rang me this morning. He said that the Irish coalition leaders had been meeting yesterday to discuss economic and budgetary issues, but had taken advantage of this to discuss the Prime Minister's letter to the Taoiseach and our latest text. They had not come to a final conclusion, but had asked Teahon to convey that, while there were helpful elements in these new texts, they could not see as of now how our new text would enable Sinn Fein to persuade the IRA to declare a new ceasefire. The particular problem remained the "waiting period" before Sinn Fein could enter the talks.

The coalition leaders had asked senior officials to review the text further (this means in practice Teahon, Dalton and O'hUiginn). They would do so. But meanwhile they would be seeing Adams and McGuinness this evening for a pre-arranged meeting. Teahon said that the discussion would depend on whether John Hume had given Adams our new text by then - the Irish did not know whether he had and would not interfere in this process. But they would in any case go through the position and explore Sinn Fein's attitudes. They would press them again on the need for Sinn Fein to make clear the kind of strong language they could use about the lasting nature of a ceasefire.

Teahon said that he would telephone me tomorrow morning with the outcome of these discussions with Sinn Fein. But the coalition leaders would need to meet again before the Irish Government took a firm view.

I took note of this without comment, except to say that the pressures on us from all sides to bring the exercise to a conclusion rapidly were very great. We could not hold off for long. Sinn Fein needed to be aware of that. Teahon took note. Teahon also asked me about our attitude to the Sinn Fein request for a direct meeting with British officials. I confirmed that we had not yet come to a view. He did not press the point.

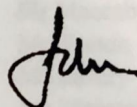
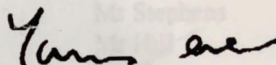
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Comment

This was a careful conversation on both sides. There was no suggestion of recrimination in what Teahon had to say. Nor did he suggest, at any rate explicitly, that the Irish would be looking to change our text again. But they are carefully keeping their options open until they see which way Sinn Fein themselves jump. Assuming they jump the wrong way, I have little doubt that the Irish will come back to us to say that our text will not do and to urge us to adopt a different approach in some way.

**JOHN HOLMES**

Robert Crawford, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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TOTAL P.03