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Mr Thomas
Mr Steele
Mr Ray
Mr Bell
Mr Leach
Mr Watkins
Mr Stephens
Mr Hill
Mr Perry
Mr Maccabe
Mr Beeton
Mr Lavery
Ms Mapstone



From: Ken Lendsean
To: John Hume
Subject: Hume / Adams Initiative
Date: 21 Nov '96

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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZ



John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 1AA

21 November 1996

Dear John,

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

I wrote to you about this initiative on 15 November. Since then there have been further discussions with the Irish Government, including at the meeting of the IGC yesterday. Although we continued to press the Irish side, it is unclear whether they will succeed in extracting the language of any possible IRA ceasefire statement from their Sinn Féin interlocutors. As you have told us, the Prime Minister believes we must now move to bring this exercise to a head, publishing the text. For that purpose he intends to send our latest version to the Taoiseach and, thereafter, to John Hume to pass on to Sinn Féin. This would be on the basis that while we believe it should remove any excuse for not declaring a ceasefire, we intend to publish the text as a statement of our position in any event.

The crucial passage concerns the terms of entry for Sinn Féin following an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire. It is on this which, for quite separate reasons, David Trimble and his party have pressed. It is only when they have clarity on that issue that they are likely to engage fully on decommissioning, the issue which at present holds back the talks.

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Members of NI will wish to see the attached passage, the elements of which David Trimble was taken through this afternoon. We hope that NI members will be able to indicate overnight whether they are content with this approach. The key criteria, agreed by NI, are set out in paragraph 7. The main new element is the description of a process which Sinn Féin would follow after a ceasefire but before they were formally invited to join the current negotiations.

This is in response to a similar process which the Irish side commended to us but, crucially in their case, that process follows immediately on their entry into talks. In our approach there will be early contact with Sinn Féin during a period when the ceasefire can be assessed.

We will phone round tomorrow morning to see if NI members are content that the Prime Minister sends the text to the Taoiseach incorporating this passage. A copy of this letter therefore goes to the Private Secretaries to all NI members and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever,

Ken

W K LINDSAY

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6 The British and Irish Governments agree that, beyond the unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire, these negotiations are without preconditions. But in the light of the breaking of the ceasefire and the events since then, assurances are obviously needed that any new ceasefire would be intended to be genuinely unequivocal, i.e. lasting and not simply a tactical device. Consistent with this, the process set out below would follow the declaration by the IRA of an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire with the stated purpose of the conflict being permanently ended.

7 The successful conclusion of this process would depend on whether words, actions and all the circumstances were consistent with a lasting ceasefire. For example, how far the declaration of a new ceasefire was convincingly unequivocal and intended to be lasting would be an important indicator. Whether or not any paramilitary activity, including surveillance, targeting and weapons preparation, continued would also be directly relevant. Developments which were inconsistent with an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire or the Mitchell principles would affect consideration adversely. Sufficient time would have to be taken to ensure the requirements of paragraphs 8 and 9 of Command Paper 3232 were accordingly met before Sinn Fein were invited to participate in negotiations.

8 We envisage that the process would involve:

- meetings with Sinn Fein at various levels to explore with them what assurances could be given and what confidence-building measures established;

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- the British and Irish Governments would invite Sinn Fein to meet them together for the purpose of making an early total and absolute commitment to the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence;

- the two Governments would then propose bilateral and other consultations with all the parties to seek to determine how, if this process were successfully concluded, the negotiations could most constructively be advanced, including the issue of the participants adopting an agreed indicative timeframe for taking stock of their progress;

- following a successful conclusion of the process set out above, including due time for consideration, the two Governments would expect the independent chairmen to convene a plenary session for all participants, with Sinn Fein invited formally to participate, to consider the outcome of these consultations and the future programme of work.

9 From their entry into negotiations onwards, Sinn Fein would, in common with all the other participants, be subject to all the agreed provisions and rules of procedure. These include those governing the contingency where any participant is no longer entitled to participate on the grounds that they have demonstrably dishonoured the principles of democracy and non-violence.

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