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10 DOWNING STREET  
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25 November 1996

From the Private Secretary

Dear Robert,

### HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

John Hume rang me this afternoon from Brussels. His main purpose was to enquire whether we had let it be known that he had received a new text from us. He was being pursued by journalists who claimed to know this. I said that we had said nothing publicly ourselves, but it was possible that David Trimble, who was aware of the position in general, might have made this claim.

This led Hume to ask whether the reports in the weekend press about a deal with Trimble were true. I said that there was absolutely no truth in them whatsoever.

Hume then said that he had given our new text to Adams. He had not been negative in discussing its content with Adams. But he could see that the area which would cause trouble was the "process" we had suggested. The key question was how long such a process would last. If we had in mind another 18 months, that would be disastrous. However, if the first few stages in the process could be completed before Christmas, and the plenary could take place once the negotiation had reopened after the Christmas recess, that might be different.

I said we had carefully avoided setting any time frame, as he would have noticed. We had made clear that some time would be needed to assess the position after a new ceasefire. The length of that time entirely depended on what the IRA and Sinn Fein said and did. So the answer to the question was in their hands.

Hume noted this without further comment of substance. He concluded with his oft-repeated fears that, if the present exercise did not work, the violence could be far worse than it had ever been.

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- 2 -

Comment

Hume seemed in reasonably buoyant mood. He made no explicit criticism himself of our text or the Prime Minister's letter. We agreed to stay in touch.

I am copying this to William Ehrman (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir John Kerr (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

*Yours ever*



JOHN HOLMES

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Northern Ireland Office

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