



10 DOWNING STREET
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S 158 /96

From the Private Secretary

1 November 1996

Dear Ken,

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

I spoke to Teahon again this afternoon to check where things stood at the Dublin end. He was not aware himself that the GAC was happening today, as we believed.

Teahon said that Hume had been in Dublin that morning. He had confirmed that he was discussing with Adams a form of words with which to return to us. The Irish had not been given the words, but understood that Adams had gone away to "clear" them. Hume had seemed optimistic. He was certainly focused on the main issue of "permanence". Teahon's impression was that Hume was likely to come back to us by the end of the weekend, or possibly on Monday. (I have tried to telephone Hume today, but he is moving around in the Republic.)

Teahon said that Hume, like the Irish Government, was very clear that any insistence by us on a time lag after a ceasefire would almost certainly cause the initiative to founder. This led us into a reprise of last night's conversation. Teahon made clear again how firmly attached the Irish Government are to their proposal. We were wrong to see it as implying that Sinn Fein would be "in" the talks at the beginning.

I made clear once again that the Irish proposal would not run here, unless Hume came back with something really meaningful. Our ideas were along the lines that time would be needed to build up confidence in a new ceasefire, and that the length of that time would depend on the success of the IRA and Sinn Fein in proving their good faith. Meanwhile, the time could be filled by some positive activity, such as contacts with us at official and perhaps Ministerial level. Other ideas were also possible, such as contact with the Chairmen outside Stormont.

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Teahon was resolutely unimpressed. He underlined again the need for the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach to speak before any irrevocable decisions were taken. The Irish believed we were wrong. They would be affected by the consequences of such a mistake, and therefore needed to be consulted.

I repeated that we would be in touch, once Hume had come back to us, and before we did anything else.

I am copying this to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office) and by fax to Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

Yours ever
John

JOHN HOLMES

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