



Prime Minister

**NORTHERN IRELAND: MAKING PROGRESS IN THE APPROACH TO CHRISTMAS**

Your statement of last week has given us a good platform from which we can hope to make progress in the period running up to Christmas. A successful Summit next Monday will play an important part in this. This minute outlines how we might use the Summit to widen support for our position and make progress.

Reaction to last week's statement

2. This has been generally positive and better than might have been expected. It has generally been seen as setting tough, but not unreasonable, common sense requirements which nonetheless hold open the door for Sinn Fein.

3. Among unionists, the UUP have been supportive. On his visit to Washington, David Trimble has confirmed that, if the criteria set out were met, then he would expect to sit down with Sinn Fein. He has also said that Sinn Fein could enter negotiations "within a fairly short period of time" if the criteria were met. While warning that HMG must now hold to the criteria it has set out, the UUP have been more relaxed in the talks this week, and there are signs that the promised flexibility on decommissioning once conditions of entry were clear may now be realised.

4. Predictably, the DUP and UKUP have claimed to see the potential for betrayal and sell-out behind last week's statement. But the criticism has been general rather than specific.

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5. John Hume was bitterly critical last week, more of the timing than the substance of the statement. When I saw him privately on Monday, however, he had calmed down, but on Tuesday night he was again black, and aggressive with Michael Ancram, asserting that we were intent on keeping Sinn Fein out. After a substantial discussion with Michael Ancram he appeared to accept that the right order was for the IRA to proclaim their unequivocal ceasefire with accompanying consistent actions and then to ask HMG to admit them. He told Michael Ancram that he would put this to Adams. His worry is that it is left unclear whether the process we set out is intended to take 2 months or 18 months. He took comfort from my reassurance that the statement was not designed to procrastinate, and did not rule out any particular timescale. He said he would be meeting Adams again soon, and wants to see you again. His critical comments reflect a general suspicion among many nationalists of HMG's intentions. It would be worthwhile if you could find time to see him again later this week. *He was friendly to me today.* *He has.*

6. The Irish Government appear to have calmed down, although the Taoiseach and Teahon feel bruised - albeit totally without justification - more over the timing than the substance of the announcement. Their main concern is also the open-ended nature of the process Sinn Fein must go through.

7. Sinn Fein has characterised the proposals as a rejection of the Hume/Adams proposals of 10 October. But the Irish Times, for example, in a generally supportive editorial asked why an end to targeting, surveillance and weapons preparation should cause difficulties if the IRA were serious. The find of the massive bomb outside Armagh has provided a direct contrast between Sinn Fein's words and the IRA's actions. ✓

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8. In summary, last week's statement has:

- put an end to all the rumours and fears associated with Hume/Adams and so stabilised the unionist position in particular;
- established our own criteria on the record in our own terms, untainted by agreement with the Irish Government or anyone else. It thus provides a solid platform on which to build and secure progress;
- but it has left a residue of suspicion and mistrust among nationalists and the Irish Government, who feel that there is still an opportunity for a ceasefire to be grasped.

9. Clearly, if we can find a way of recruiting the Irish and US Governments to our position, without alienating unionists, that would further strengthen it and put renewed pressure on Sinn Fein. ✓

Objectives

10. Our objectives in the run up to Christmas should be: ✓

- to stand firm on last week's statement, as the corner stone of our policy and the bedrock of unionist confidence in it;
- to enlist support for our position from the US and Irish Governments; ✓

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- to resolve decommissioning before the Christmas recess, making use of the greater flexibility the UUP should now have and co-opting the support of the Irish Government to an approach which meets unionist concerns. ✓

Key events

11. The key events, which are all likely to be interlinked, are:

- a response to the US scenario: we owe the Americans some response. The more positive we can make it, while standing firm on the criteria we have set out, the more likely we are to recruit US support for our position;
- further meetings with John Hume and, possibly, David Trimble on his return from Washington. Both would provide opportunities to offer key reassurances to each side: for Trimble, that we shall stand firmly by the criteria set out in the statement; and, for Hume, that it does not preclude a scenario under which an IRA ceasefire in mid-December, satisfactorily declared and followed by conduct which meets all our criteria, could enable Sinn Fein to join the negotiations by mid - February (US suggestion);
- the Anglo-Irish Summit on 9 December: this is now a key opportunity to recruit Irish support both for the criteria we have set out for Sinn Fein's entry and for a compromise outcome on decommissioning which will meet unionist concerns. It is clear that the Irish Government are approaching the Summit wanting badly to see relations between the two Governments visibly restored; ✓

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*1 sec (a) to 1000  
proofing) w'd have  
+ appear in Jan.*

- a continuation of the talks process up until the Christmas recess, with the aim of concluding the address to decommissioning by then.

### Managing the Summit

12. Last week's statement provides an excellent platform for achieving these objectives. It provides the reassurance which Unionists have sought that we will not fudge the criteria for Sinn Fein's entry into the negotiations. It means that the communique for next week's summit can refer back to the statement as the definitive account of HMG's policy, so reassuring unionists that any outcome from the summit will not undermine that.

*Flow?* 13. But our statement is also compatible with the key elements of the US scenario and the Irish desire to see some certainty on when Sinn Fein would enter the negotiations if the criteria were met. So we can afford to give a positive response to both US and Irish concerns without risk of undermining last week's statement. ?

14. Last week's statement may also make possible more flexibility from the UUP on decommissioning. If so, then next week's summit offers the chance to secure Irish support for a compromise approach on decommissioning which takes account of unionist concerns, as well as an opportunity to respond positively to Irish concerns about last week's statement whilst sticking firmly to it.

15. With this in mind, Annex A is the first draft of a possible Summit communique. It is designed to recruit Irish support - and, through them, US support also - by: .



- repeating that we stand by our statement;
- reaffirming that both Governments are agreed on paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Ground Rules (an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire and Sinn Fein establishing a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and showing that they abide by the democratic process), as the requirements which must be satisfied if Sinn Fein is to join the negotiations (they were the foundation of last week's statement also and are the requirements et in legislation);
- providing these requirements are met - and, for our part, that must be on the basis of the criteria in last week's statement - a ceasefire immediately following next week's summit could lead to Sinn Fein's entry into negotiations by mid-February. *OK 1/11 then.*

16. A threshold date for Sinn Fein's entry providing our criteria are met is the key to recruiting US and Irish support (eg "by mid - February we could envisage being able to invite Sinn Fein"). It enables us to offer a positive response to the US scenario put to us by Lake last week. An analysis of this is attached at Annex B. Providing it is clear that the IRA must meet the requirements set out in last week's statement, the key elements of the US scenario are compatible with it.

17. We want to discourage active US intervention. This might best be achieved by copying them this draft communique and explaining that it builds both upon last week's statement and their own interesting ideas. Again, this offers an opportunity to recruit US support for the criteria we have set out, which will all help maximise pressure on Sinn Fein.





18. If what Teahon said last week still holds true, a threshold date should also mean that the Irish will be prepared to support, or at least acquiesce in, the criteria we have set out. That will also facilitate a fair wind from the Irish Government for compromise proposals on decommissioning which take account of Unionist concerns.

19. Without a threshold date by which Sinn Fein could get into negotiations providing the requirements are met, the Irish analysis (shared by Lake) is that Sinn Fein - and many nationalists with them - will assume we will use our criteria deliberately to delay and stall on Sinn Fein's entry. With that uncertainty, even if Adams wants a ceasefire, he will not be able to persuade the hardliners that Sinn Fein will actually get into negotiations. John Hume has claimed it could even take another 18 months. That is nonsense but damages the credibility of our position with both the Irish and the US, and so helps Sinn Fein secure some sympathy for its own position.

20. David Trimble is on record as recognising that Sinn Fein could be brought into talks after an IRA ceasefire "within a fairly short period of time" if it used "quite clear, convincing language, immediately stopped all paramilitary activity and made all the right noises with regard to the Mitchell principles and decommissioning." The key to reassuring unionists is to stand by the criteria we have set out - but that is not incompatible with setting out also a threshold date at which we could envisage Sinn Fein's entry providing those criteria are met.



### Gameplan

21. This suggests our gameplan for the weeks between now and Christmas should be:

#### This week

- put draft communique to Irish Government: possibly for discussion between officials (Holmes/Teahon, Butler/Teahon, Liaison Group?);
- respond positively to US scenario using draft communique to suggest we are building on our statement and US ideas (we can offer a draft to Lake for this purpose, if you wish);
- see Hume and Trimble separately to provide reassurances: nothing precluded; we will stand by last week's criteria.
- NI Committee? - letter, not meeting.

#### Summit

- repeat commitment to last week's text; ✓
- reaffirm shared commitment to paragraphs 8 and 9 of Ground Rules; ✓
- if the criteria in our text are met, an immediate ceasefire could enable Sinn Fein to join the talks by mid - February;

✓ w/w a few weeks



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- recruit Irish support for compromise approach to decommissioning taking account of unionist concerns.

Before Christmas

- bring about UUP/Irish convergence on decommissioning. (The Independent Chairmen, with the assent of all the parties, are now working to identify an acceptable compromise);
- conclude opening plenary so three strands can be launched in January;
- maximise pressure on Sinn Fein by securing US/Irish support and achieving progress in the talks.

Conclusion

22. On the basis of last week's statement, we are in a good position. We should aim to manage the run-up to Christmas in order to retain unionist confidence and at the same time recruit US and Irish support. The gameplan and draft communique recommendation is designed to achieve this.

23. A copy goes to the Foreign Secretary, Sir Robin Butler and Colin Budd.

Approved by the Secretary of State  
and signed in his absence

*Kennd Lindsay*

*for* P.M.

4 December 1996

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