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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

JH Adams
Prime Minister
This will give you a
flavour!

*We need to think
through how you
approach Britain.*

29 November 1996

Wisham.

John 29/Ki.

*File
10/12*
*Sorry you had this
difficulty - but we have
no choice.*

Dear Gen.

I'm not as reluctant as we are of security info.

HUME/ADAMS STATEMENT: IRISH AND US VIEWS

70.11

The Irish Ambassador called on me this morning for some 45 minutes. He said that both Paddy Teahon and the Taoiseach felt personally bruised after what had happened. Paddy Teahon felt particularly that I had misled him, both after the Trimble meeting last week, when I had said that we had no plans for a statement by the Prime Minister on 28 November; and because I had only told him we were making the statement late yesterday morning.

I said that I was sorry if Paddy felt that. My reassurance to him after the Trimble meeting had certainly been true at the time (and I did not mean that I was hiding behind a literal truth when I expected a statement all along). Similarly, I had made clear to Paddy all the way through this week that we were under severe pressure to publish and that I did not expect us to be able to resist this pressure. I had not said that we would definitely publish because this decision had only been taken on Thursday morning (timing at least had genuinely been in doubt until the very last minute, and the Prime Minister had decided to put it to Cabinet).

We also discussed the pressure on us to make our statement. Barrington made clear that the Irish had difficulty in believing this. I said that the pressure had been very real, as I had told Paddy Teahon several times. The fact that it was not all visible on the surface did not mean that it did not exist. And, as I had also told Paddy, Adams' press conference on Tuesday had made it impossible to go on saying nothing ourselves. I hoped the Irish were taking this up with Adams.

We went round this circle for a while. Barrington eventually said he was not anxious to dwell on it but preferred to look forward. He said that the Irish side had noted carefully what Jonathan Stephens had said to Sean O'hUiggin and Dalton ie that we did not rule out a particular timescale or scenario. In Irish eyes, what was needed was a process that had predictability and a definite date at the end of it. They believed that without a certain date for entry (as

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long as they did all the right things), the IRA and Sinn Fein would not declare a ceasefire. Could we envisage spelling out the end of January date before or at the 9 December Summit?

I said that I thought this would be extremely difficult, given the way we had laid out our position. It would simply not be understood or politically credible here. We had made clear yesterday, and I was happy to make clear again, that the kind of date the Irish were talking about was not ruled out. But that depended on the IRA and Sinn Fein. We had set out clearly what we needed. We had not fixed a timescale, short or long. We wanted an inclusive process and were not looking for delay. The Secretary of State would have no difficulty sending an invitation to Sinn Fein if he were satisfied that the conditions were met. But it was for the IRA and Sinn Fein to respond to what we had said.

Barrington continued to press on whether we could go further and set a date. I continued to say that I did not believe we would be able to do this. I also referred to the difficulty of bringing Sinn Fein in, if the result was only to see the Unionists walk out. But we would not let that stand in the way of Sinn Fein receiving an invitation, if they had met the criteria.

Barrington said that I was painting a pessimistic picture, and he did not think there was much point, on this basis, of officials meeting before the 9 December Summit. I repeated that we had set out our position and did not see why we could not receive a positive response. We wanted to go on working with the Irish Government, and no doubt the wordsmiths could come up with something to cover our positions. But there was no point in holding out false hopes. Meanwhile, I should warn him that suggestions coming out of Dublin that they would soon persuade us to shift our position and that only statements by both government had real authority were deeply offensive to us. I hoped they would stop.

Barrington argued that the whole point of the Hume/Adams exercise had been to achieve a new ceasefire. What was the point of making a statement if it did not produce a ceasefire? I said that we had had doubts about the Hume-Adams process from the beginning. It had not been our idea. And it had been possible to foresee an outcome like this right from the start. But I hoped Barrington was not suggesting that we could not clarify our position unless we clarified it to Sinn Fein's satisfaction. That would be quite unacceptable.

Barrington changed the subject and said that Teahon, O'hUiggin and Dalton had met Adams again last night, as Sean Donlon would be telling Veronica Sutherland. Adams had made four main points:

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- (i) the British had rejected the Hume/Adams initiative and it was now over;
- (ii) the Prime Minister had chosen David Trimble over John Hume;
- (iii) the militants in the IRA could now give their response;
- (iv) Adams would be arguing strongly against that, but he could give no comfort about his ability to succeed.

Adams would be meeting Irish officials next week to discuss a new initiative to enable the ceasefire to be restored. Barrington did not know what was meant by that, but assumed it would be based on the idea of setting a specific date for Sinn Fein's entry.

Later in the day, I had Tony Lake and Nancy Soderberg on the line. They did not waste time on recriminations. Lake simply asked what we proposed to do now. I said that we had set out our position in reasonable terms. Surely it was for others to respond to that. He said that, as we must know, our statement could not achieve a ceasefire. Sinn Fein did not trust us and would not declare a ceasefire until they knew when they were getting in to the talks. Otherwise they felt we would always find some reason to keep them out.

We went through the usual exchanges about all this, with me arguing that the key to all this lay in the hands of the IRA and Sinn Fein, and he arguing that we had to give them predictability. He said that he would take the same position if he were them. He tried to compare the situation to that in the Middle East. I rejected this. The IRA were not the PLO. The IRA were operating as a terrorist movement in a democracy, and before sitting round a table with them we needed to know that they were not simply going to go back to violence.

Lake argued that this was not facing reality. He accepted that some in the IRA did not want to give up violence. But they had to be brought into the political process to force them to do so. He kept repeating that the IRA and Sinn Fein needed some certainty because they did not trust us. He did not see why we could not give them this certainty, especially if we knew in advance that they were going to respond in the right way. We should put the pressure on them. I explained the political difficulty of this, but Lake brushed this aside. He concluded that, although he would not say this to others, he believed we were making a fundamental mistake. We were missing a huge opportunity and looking at the failure of our whole Irish policy.

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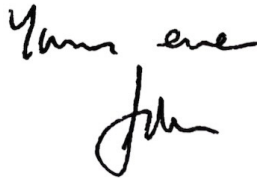
I refuted this. The ball was in the Sinn Fein and IRA court. Lake should be putting the pressure on them not on us. It was for them to respond to what we had said. I added that we were nevertheless looking closely at the plan we had been sent by the Americans, to see what we could make of it. But

I repeated that I could not see us agreeing to announce a firm date for Sinn Fein's entry. We left it at that.

Comment

These were not easy conversations. But this pressure from both quarters was entirely predictable. Barrington did not lay on the recriminations too thick and the atmosphere was friendly on a personal level. Lake's reaction, although again friendly on a personal level, was more disappointing. The Americans have clearly decided they should put the pressure on us and not on Sinn Fein. We need to turn them round on this, if we can. We also need to find a way to respond constructively to the Americans' plan, without committing ourselves to things that simply will not run. As a first step in working on the Americans I have sent Lake copies of the editorials from today's Irish Times and Irish Independent, both of which essentially support our position.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Holmes', with a stylized 'J' and 'H'.

JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay Esq
Northern Ireland Office

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