



Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

SUBJECT
MASTER

Filed on:

28th November, 1996.

The Rt. Hon. John Major, M.P.,
Prime Minister

Dear John

I was particularly disturbed to learn just before our 'phone call that you had unilaterally decided to publish the text of your communication to John Hume, M.P., M.E.P.

Progress in relation to the difficult situation which both Irish and British Governments have faced over the last twenty five years has been made only when both Governments have found it possible to synchronise their policies and approaches.

Since I became Taoiseach, I have sought at all times to proceed in this matter on the basis of agreement with you. It is in this spirit that my Government has in recent months been working with you in support of the Hume initiative

The objective - our joint objective - was to achieve a ceasefire, one that was credible and unequivocal.

The only purpose of your publishing a statement, whenever that might be done, was to achieve that ceasefire.

As I hope I made clear in our call, to proceed this afternoon in the certain knowledge that it will not achieve its purpose will simply convince the Republican Movement that the whole exercise was tactical and manifestly aimed at some objective other than a ceasefire. Premature publication in the

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way proposed will make our attempts to restore a ceasefire immeasurably more difficult.

What will happen I fear is that Hume/Adams will publish their proposal and a most confrontational debate about British attitudes to the peace process will take place. I will, in these circumstances, have to make my own position abundantly clear.

The outcome will then be a rift in Anglo-Irish relations with appalling potential consequences for both Governments and for all our people.

It is my judgement imperative, if your decision to publish is irrevocable, that the text of your article be accompanied by an agreed public indication of the two Government's support for the following course of action:

- there would be an early Christmas break next week in the talks of approximately two months to last until 30th January
- that in the event of an IRA declaration now of the unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire, and of Sinn Féin signing up to the Mitchell principles with both Governments early after that declaration, and further, provided that there is adherence both to the cessation and to the Mitchell principles, Sinn Féin would be invited to join the talks from their resumption on 30th January.

I urgently await the response which you promised me on this.

Yours sincerely

John
Taoiseach.

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