



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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From the Private Secretary

*W. Staley (Kilwin)*  
*Mr Hume*  
*For file &*  
*please return*  
*a copy to*  
*me.*  
27 September 1996  
*lnk.*  
*10.10.96*

*Dee Paddy,*

... I enclose a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has just sent to John Hume, covering a text setting out our approach to the multi-party negotiations. We would aim to publish this text early next week, probably in the form of a press article under the name of the Prime Minister. I have made clear to John Hume, in sending him the text, that the terms of it are not up for negotiation. It represents what we propose to say, no more no less.

It would be helpful if, in any contacts you have with those concerned, you could underline that this is a reasonable statement of British policy and that more cannot be expected. It is now for John Hume and those to whom he has been talking to deliver on what they said.

*Yours ever*  
*John*

JOHN HOLMES

Mr Paddy Teahon



10 DOWNING STREET  
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THE PRIME MINISTER

27 September 1996

Thank you for your letter of 8 August and the text which you faxed on 6 September.

The IRA's position, as you describe it, is that if we were ready to make this statement, and the IRA knew when we were going to make it, they would respond shortly afterwards, at a time specified in advance, with an unequivocal restoration of the August 1994 "total cessation".

When I wrote to you on 24 July, I said that the IRA should restore their ceasefire without any further prevarication. But, in response to the suggestion that reassurances from the British Government on certain issues in line with its established public policy would help to bring this about, I set out words which could be used.

Now they have returned with one significant issue - the timeframe - which is simply not under our control, and an altogether longer text covering a host of other issues. Meanwhile, continued preparation for further IRA attacks goes on, as the arrests and arms finds on Monday demonstrate all too clearly. Intimidation and so-called punishment attacks also continue to increase in

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number and brutality. As I have already said publicly, Sinn Fein's talk of peace can have little credibility against this background.

It remains the case that the IRA should restore their ceasefire without further ado and without the need for further statements. The Government is certainly not in the business of negotiating a restoration of the IRA ceasefire, nor in giving secret assurances to bring it about. Sinn Fein must understand that we mean in private what we say in public.

Nevertheless, if there is genuine doubt or uncertainty over the Government's policy, I am happy to look at that. Because I am in no doubt of the benefits, for the people of Northern Ireland and the negotiations, of a genuine and unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire, we will repeat and reaffirm our approach on the key issues. The attached text has been prepared for this purpose, and will be published in the near future.

Your Friendly  
John H.

John Hume, Esq., M.P.

!text.png

This Government has made clear its approach to the search for peace in Northern Ireland on many occasions. But we continue to be asked about this or that aspect, particularly about the multi-party negotiations which started on 10 June in Belfast. There has been continued speculation about a new IRA ceasefire, despite the latest huge arms and explosives find in London. This has renewed questions about what effect this would have on the negotiations, and our approach to these negotiations. It may therefore be helpful to spell out our position again.

The negotiations have one overriding aim: to reach an overall political settlement, achieved through agreement and founded on consent. They will address all the issues relevant to such a settlement. Inclusive in nature, they involve both Governments and all the relevant political parties with the necessary democratic mandate and commitment to exclusively peaceful methods.

The prospects for success in these negotiations will obviously be much greater if they take place in a peaceful environment. Under the legislation setting up the talks, if the Government considered that there was an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994, Sinn Fein would be invited to nominate a team to participate in the negotiations. We would of course need to be sure that any restoration was genuinely unequivocal, particularly in view of events on the ground. Beyond that, the British and Irish Governments are agreed that these negotiations are without preconditions.

It is equally clear that, to be successful, the negotiations must be based on exclusively democratic and peaceful means. There must be no recourse to the threat (actual or implied) or use of violence or coercion. So, on entering

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the negotiations, each participant needs to make clear their total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the Report of the International Body chaired by Senator George Mitchell. The parties in the talks have all done just that already.

The range of issues on which an overall agreement will depend means that the negotiations will be on the basis of a comprehensive agenda. This will be adopted by agreement. Each participant will be able to raise any significant issue of concern to them, and to receive a fair hearing for those concerns, without this being subject to the veto of any other party. Any aspect can be raised, including constitutional issues and any other matter which any party considers relevant. No negotiated outcome is either predetermined or excluded in advance or limited by anything other than the need for agreement.

Among the crucial issues is decommissioning. So the opening plenary will address the International Body's proposals on decommissioning of illegal arms. At that stage, we, along with the Irish Government, will be looking for the commitment of all participants to work constructively during the negotiations to implement all aspects of the International Body's report. This includes its compromise approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of negotiations. We want to make urgent progress in this area so that the process of decommissioning is not seen as a precondition to further progress, but is used to build confidence one step at a time during the negotiations. As progress is made on political issues, even modest mutual steps on decommissioning could help create the atmosphere needed for further steps in a progressive pattern of mounting trust and confidence.

It is important to emphasise that all parties are treated equally in the negotiations in accordance with the scale of their democratic mandate. No

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party has an undemocratic advantage. The negotiations will operate on the basis of consensus, requiring at least the support of parties representing a majority of both the unionist and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland. But no one party can prevent them continuing by withdrawing from the negotiations.

It is essential that all participants negotiate in good faith, seriously address all areas of the agreed agenda and make every effort to reach a comprehensive agreement. For their part, the two Governments are committed to ensure that all items on the comprehensive agenda are fully addressed. They will do so themselves with a view to overcoming any obstacles which may arise.

For our part, we are wholly committed to upholding, so far as we can, our responsibility to facilitate agreement in the negotiations. This must be based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions. We want to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement.

We are also determined to see these negotiations through successfully, as speedily as possible. This is in line with the hopes and aspirations of people in both the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. These have already given momentum to a process which will always have its difficulties. We have already proposed that a plenary meeting should be held at a suitable date to take stock of progress in the negotiations as a whole. We will support any agreed timeframe for the conduct of the negotiations adopted by the participants.

Meanwhile we are committed to raising confidence, both through the talks and through a range of other measures alongside them. The International Body's report itself proposes a process of mutual confidence-building.

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So we will continue to pursue social and economic policies based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and parity of esteem irrespective of political, cultural or religious affiliation or gender. We are committed to increasing community identification with policing in Northern Ireland.

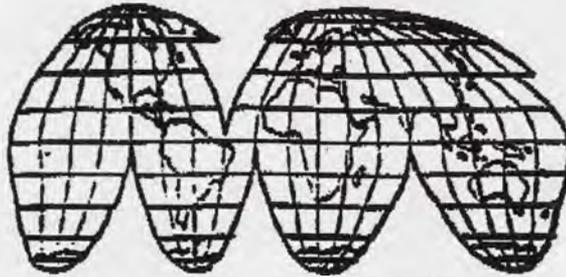
It is worth recalling that, in response to the ceasefires of Autumn 1994 and the changed level of threat, we undertook a series of confidence-building measures. These included changed arrangements for release of prisoners in Northern Ireland under the Northern Ireland (Remission of Sentences) Act 1995, security force redeployments, a review of emergency legislation and others. If the threat reduces again, the opportunity for further confidence-building measures returns.

But confidence-building is a two-way street. Support for the use of violence is incompatible with participation in the democratic process. An end to punishment beatings and other paramilitary activities, including surveillance and targeting, would demonstrate real commitment to peaceful methods and help build trust.

The opportunity for progress has never been greater. The negotiations are widely supported internationally and benefit from independent chairmen from the USA, Canada and Finland. They also have the overwhelming support of people throughout these islands. They want them to take place in a peaceful environment, free of all paramilitary violence. That is our aim too.



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**SECURE FAX**

**To :** EMBASSY LONDON **Date:** 07/9/96

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**From :** SEAN O HOISINN

**Subject :** \_\_\_\_\_

**Priority:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Secure Fax No.:** \_\_\_\_\_

To  
AMB. D GALLAGHER

FROM  
PADDY TEAHON

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Comments on document attached to Prime Minister's letter to John Hume**  
**Preliminary analysis compared to Hume's submission**

Key Points which could be made to the British

1. We welcome the efforts in the paper to present existing British positions in a positive light.
2. We should give the recipients space for reflection and not rush into print before we have some sense of the climate/reaction in that quarter.
3. The decommissioning interpretation is one legitimate interpretation of paragraphs 33 and 35 of the International Body's report, but we have left space for a somewhat different interpretation. The reference should be limited to implementing all aspects of the report (as in 6 June docs.)
4. The reference to the decommissioning precondition is passive and rather evasive.
5. While the reference to confidence building is helpful, it is vague. Some comfort in this area would be a very valuable dimension. What can be done in practice?

Analysis

While the paper attached to the Prime Minister's letter to John Hume, does not meet all the points raised in the document forwarded by John Hume, it can fairly be described as fairly positive in intent. The paper is obviously drafted also for defensive purposes, to ward off any accusations of negotiating with violence. It is, however, helpful that the Prime Minister does offer to "look at" "genuine doubt or uncertainty" over Government policy

The two most obvious differences between the British text and the Hume text relate to a time frame and decommissioning.

Major specifically adverts in his letter to the British refusal to commit themselves to a time frame (paragraph 10 of the Hume text). Instead the British text commits them to supporting any agreed time frame for the conduct of the negotiations. Major is correct in stating that the time frame "is simply not under our control". On the other hand, the British could have more helpfully said something along the lines of "we will encourage any efforts by the parties to

agree a time frame for the negotiations and will seek to ensure that any agreed timetable is met", and could have envisaged more far-reaching targets, reviews etc..

2 As regards decommissioning, while the Hume paper (paragraph 11) states that the "negotiations will address with all other issues, the International Body's proposals on decommissioning without making this a precondition to further progress in the negotiations", the British paper includes a substantial paragraph on decommissioning emphasising the expectation of both Governments that the participants will commit themselves to "work constructively during the negotiations to implement all aspects of the International Body's report." The British paper goes on to state that "this includes its compromise approach under which some decommissioning will take place during the process of negotiations". **This qualification, did not appear in the commitment sought of the parties in the 6 June Opening Scenario paper and was omitted, at our insistence, from the paper handed over to the UUP this week. It represents one particular interpretation of paragraphs 34 and 35 of the Mitchell Body's report ("the parties should consider such an approach") and should be dropped from the British text.**

The following is a summary of the other significant points of difference between the two texts. The paragraph numbers refer to the Hume document, unless otherwise stated.

#### Paragraph 2

Hume speaks of the British Government being "wholly committed" to upholding its responsibility to give "clear and firm guidance". The British text states that "we are wholly committed to upholding, so far as we can, our responsibility to facilitate agreement in the negotiations". This is hardly a serious difference.

#### Paragraph 3

3 There is no echo in the British paper of Hume's statement that "the primary interest is to see....agreement between all the people who inhabit the island of Ireland", although the British are on record on this in the Joint Declaration in any case. In this context, the reference to "peace in Northern Ireland" in the first sentence of the British draft is somewhat narrow, and **there is room to stress the need for the negotiations to address the three relationships.**

#### Paragraph 4

The Hume document speaks of "achieving agreement on the basis of equality of treatment and parity of esteem". The British text states that agreement "must be based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions". It also commits the British Government to pursuing "social and economic policies based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equality of treatment and parity of esteem". These differences should not be insurmountable.

#### Paragraph 5

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The Hume document speaks of the desirability of a peaceful environment and stresses that there should be no preconditions. The British text makes clear that there must be an IRA ceasefire before Sinn Féin can join the talks and that all participants are expected to sign up to the Mitchell principles. We can hardly argue with this.

Paragraph 9

The points raised in the Hume document are essentially covered, although the commitment of the two Governments "to ensure that a comprehensive agenda is addressed and that any obstacles which may arise are overcome" is replaced in the British text by language based on paragraph 15 of the Ground Rules:

"For their part, the two Governments are committed to ensure that all items on the comprehensive agenda are fully addressed. They will do so themselves with a view to overcoming any obstacles which might arise".

Paragraph 10

See above for detail on timescale.

Paragraph 11

Hume refers to an open agenda, while the British, in conformity with the rules of procedure state that the agenda shall be agreed.

Paragraph 12

See above regarding decommissioning.

Paragraph 14

(4) The British document does not fully reflect Hume's call for the Government to commit itself to equality in relation to cultural issues, although it does refer to economic and social policies which do not discriminate on the basis of cultural affiliation. **These are not quite the same thing. Surely the British can make some genuflection to a commitment to nurture the cultural tradition of both communities.**

Paragraph 15

The British response to Hume's point on the need for action on prisoners is weak and linked to a restoration of the ceasefire. The reference in the Hume document to "a policing service and policing methods which would enjoy widespread acceptability" is met with the response that "we are committed to increasing community identification with policing in Northern Ireland". However, the expectation of police reform in advance of negotiations was probably unrealistic.

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Paragraph 16

There is no echo of Hume's reference to equality of treatment for the Irish language and culture. See also paragraph 14.

Paragraph 17

There is no obvious pick-up on this paragraph in the British document, although terms such as "the empowerment and inclusion of deprived communities" do not generally appear in the Tory vocabulary. The reference to the imbalance in unemployment could conceivably be said to have been covered in the references to "equality of opportunity, equity of treatment etc. in economic and social policy.