

Lines to take

Hume/Adams talks, their implications and our response.

I have said all along that Mr Hume's talks with Mr Adams are a matter for him. I understand that it is Hume's judgement that his talks represent a good chance for peace - we would all hope that that were true, but it is deeds not just words which will be the proof of that, and in the last seven days we have had IRA bombs in London and Belfast.

No question of conniving in secret deals. Hume has been acting on his own behalf, not as an intermediacy or proxy. Our policy is clear - we will not talk to those who engage in or support violence to achieve their political ends.

I understand that Hume [will brief] [has briefed] the Taoiseach on his talks. If the Irish Government feel that they wish to make proposals to us as a result of that then we will study them closely.

I would not wish to speculate about any proposals the Irish Government might wish to make at this stage.

Self determination

We have said plainly, and it is accepted in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that the present status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom will not be changed unless it is the wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

[If pressed]

It doesn't matter what term you use - the real issue is one of consent. There will be no change without the consent of the people of Northern Ireland.

Prospects for further political Talks

We are committed, as is the Irish Government, to doing what we can to encourage the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland to build on the foundations laid in previous talks to make the progress which I believe is possible.

Joint sovereignty. Has HMG firmly ruled it out

I have said [Liverpool speech, 23 April] that any settlement must be acceptable to all the participants, and that while we have no blueprint I could make a judgement that the Talks process was not going to conclude with Northern Ireland becoming subject to the joint political authority of the United Kingdom and Irish Governments because that outcome would not be acceptable to public opinion in Northern Ireland.

Would HMG be prepared to make a pronouncement that the long term solution is a united Ireland

Let me repeat the Government's position: there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom unless a majority of the people of Northern Ireland wishes it.

If a majority of the people of Northern Ireland came to wish for a united Ireland, the Government would not stand in the way of the democratic will.

We declared in the Anglo-Irish Agreement that were that to happen we would legislate to give it effect.

Increasing problem of loyalist violence

Naturally very worried. We abhor violence from wherever it comes: There can be no justification for it.

Constraints on the Government, eg need for Ulster Unionist votes
at Westminster

Always a variety of different constraints on Government.
Our policies for Northern Ireland are supported by the
House of Commons and will continue to be so. Those
policies are in the best interests of all the people of
Northern Ireland and I think the Ulster Unionists know that
as well as anyone.