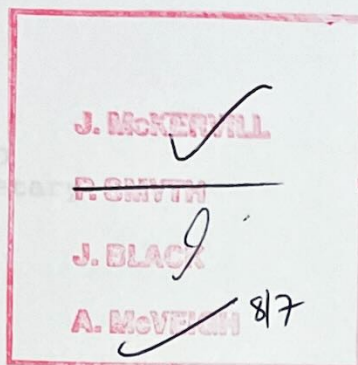


CONFIDENTIAL AND PERSONAL

FROM: PS/SECRETARY OF STATE  
26 June 1996

318.  
2133  
POLITICAL AFFAIR  
DIVISION  
26 JUN 1996  
N.I.O. BELFAST

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B  
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B  
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B  
PS/PUS (B&L) - B  
PS/Sir David Fell - B  
Mr Legge - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Ray - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Leach (B&L) - B  
Mr Stephens - B  
Mr Hill (B&L) - B  
Mr Perry - B  
Mr Maccabe - B  
Mr Beeton - B  
Mr Lavery - B  
Ms Checksfield - B  
Miss Harrison (B&L) - B  
Mr Whysall (B&L) - B  
Mr Cran - B



Mr Thomas (B&L) - B

N.B.

#### BILATERAL WITH THE TAOISEACH

You and copy addresses will have seen John Holmes' letter to me of 24 June reporting on bilaterals between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach in the margins of the Florence European Council, together with my reply of today's date.

2. You will note that I have drawn attention to the sensitivity of the passage dealing with the elements of a possible settlement. The Secretary of State and Michael Ancram are particularly concerned that no hint should emerge which might (indeed almost certainly would be) be presented by unionists as a covert attempt to stitch up a deal behind their backs. I should therefore be grateful if those who have received this correspondence should treat it with great care.

3. On the point of substance, it would be helpful, in due course, to have your comments on the points raised by the Taoiseach

CONFIDENTIAL AND PERSONAL

AD/2671X8/298



CONFIDENTIAL AND PERSONAL

about the nature of a final settlement. We may be able to draw on some of the work that was done in the aftermath of 'Frameworks' to identify the elements that would need to be covered in any overall settlement. However, the impression I get is that the Taoiseach is looking for something rather less specific which deals with the 'psychology of the situation', to coin a phrase.

Signed

MARTIN HOWARD  
Private Secretary

Mr. Legge  
Mr. Steele  
Mr. Ray  
Mr. Bell  
Mr. Leach (L&B)  
Mr. Stephens  
Mr. Hill (L&B)  
Mr. Percy  
Mr. Macdonald  
Mr. Boston  
Mr. Lavery  
Mr. Cheekfield  
Miss Harrison (L&B)  
Mr. Weyhall (L&B)  
Mr. Cran

MR THOMAS (L&B) - B

BILATERAL WITH THE TAOISEACH

I should welcome a word about the commission in Martin Howard's minute of 26 June, following up the account of the dialogue between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach on 22 June in Florence.

2. Apart from the sensitivity vis a vis the Unionists to which Martin Howard rightly draws attention, I am concerned myself at the possibility that the Taoiseach, while not binning the Framework Document, is actually retreating from the absolutely fundamental issues of Irish recognition of Northern Ireland's status, and the constitutional claim in the Irish Constitution. If, as I hope, the Taoiseach's interest in symbolic and psychological steps is additional to essential progress on the constitutional questions, then fine. But picking up the recent minutes by Peter Bell and David Hill on the constitutional issue, we sure we must be alert to any attempt to divert attention away from that agenda. I very much doubt if that is the Taoiseach's intention, but there are those in his government and in the Irish Government machine who could seek to exploit it in that way.

Signed

JOHN CHILCOT

CONFIDENTIAL AND PERSONAL

BB/SSTALKS/298

2003/06/082356