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FROM: MISS G HARRISON
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17 JULY 1996

10 Downing Street
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cc PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Thomas (L&B) - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Leach (L&B) - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mrs Collins - B
Mr Hill (L&B) - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Lindsay (POB) - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Perry - B
Ms Checksfield - B
Ms Mapstone - B
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Lamont, FCO RID - B

PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE ALLIANCE PARTY

I attach a draft brief for the Prime Minister's meeting with Dr Alderdice tomorrow afternoon.

(Signed)

G Harrison (Miss)
Political Development Team
17 July 1996

The background to Drumcree was set out in my letter of [yesterday] which provided briefing for the Prime Minister's meeting with the SDLP.

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John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
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July 1996

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH DR ALDERDICE: THURSDAY 18 JULY 1996

The Prime Minister has agreed to meet Dr Alderdice in the House of Commons at 3.40pm tomorrow.

Judging from his conversation with you on 12 July and by his comments during his bilateral meeting with the Secretary of State and Michael Ancram on Tuesday Dr Alderdice will be in a grim and gloomy mood. The meeting is likely to focus on the lack of confidence among the nationalist community and also many protestants, in the Chief Constable and the RUC following Drumcree, together with the undermining of the talks process by the actions of the Unionists, particularly David Trimble.

OBJECTIVES

At the meeting, the Prime Minister might therefore aim to:

- listen to Dr Alderdice's views;
- show understanding of the depth of feeling by both the nationalists and liberal protestants;
- confirm the Government's belief that a settlement is possible;
- reaffirm the Government's commitment to the talks process;
- persuade the Alliance Party to continue to engage constructively in the negotiations.

The background to Drumcree was set out in my letter of [yesterday] which provided briefing for the Prime Minister's meeting with the SDLP.

In the light of the Secretary of State's meeting with Dr Alderdice yesterday, Dr Alderdice is likely to be coming to the meeting in a grim pessimistic mood. As with the meeting with the SDLP, the Prime

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POLICING

Dr Alderdice considers that by reversing his original decision at Drumcree, the Chief Constable was saying that the rule of law cannot be enforced in the face of the Orange Order and that the RUC would prefer to stand up to the nationalists rather than Unionists. The result has been a complete loss of confidence in the RUC by the nationalist community, and he would find it difficult to argue against any future nationalist demands for greater Dublin involvement in Northern Ireland, to protect their interests. The only way to restore confidence would be to remove the Chief Constable from his post.

TALKS

Dr Alderdice also believes that by their actions the Unionist's (both UUP and DUP) have entirely wrecked the Talks process, and have clearly breached the Mitchell principles of democracy and consent by their failure to oppose the threat or use of force by others. He has alleged that Mr Trimble's meeting with Billy Wright, a known loyalist paramilitary who has not noticeably supported the loyalist ceasefire, is evidence of a conspiracy to undermine the leadership of the UVF because it is too liberal. But he did admit that Mr Trimble had the support of 80% of the protestant population. Dr Alderdice also believes that the Unionists activities have undermined the arguments about the exclusion of Sinn Fein from the Talks, on the grounds that they use force and threat of force to achieve political ends - despite the fact that the requirement for a ceasefire has been set in statute. When he spoke with you he saw no prospect of a settlement and he has been unable to offer any suggestions as to how to keep the talks process going, apart from asking the Unionists what action they propose to take to repair the damage. He has returned to his familiar theme of calling for the two Governments to take responsibility and impose a solution.

HANDLING

In the light of the Secretary of State's meeting with Dr Alderdice yesterday, Dr Alderdice is likely to be coming to the meeting in a grim pessimistic mood. As with the meeting with the SDLP, the Prime

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

Minister may wish to aim to absorb Dr Alderdice's recriminations over Drumcree, while seeking to move on to discuss how to take the political process forward. Also as with the SDLP, the Prime Minister may wish to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation, the setback for law and order that it represents, and acknowledge that nationalists feel anger and dismay. He may wish to reaffirm the Government's commitment to make progress in the negotiations and move on quickly to deal with substantive issues, and encourage Dr Alderdice to continue to play his usual constructive role in promoting constructive dialogue. Count in Parliament, and the Chief Constable has been quite open in his view of events.

Speaking notes are attached on the following copies:

Whatever our different views, recognise there has been a serious set
Drumcree idespread intimidation of Catholics despicable. Challenge
Policing (also includes background note) ous affront. Equally,
Talks process justify rioting in nationalist areas.

We must now move on beyond the recriminations to find a political way forward. This is the only answer. None of us should give up on it.

Review of Marches

Recognise need for wide-ranging review. Not to adjudicate on routes of individual marches, but to look at overall legal Framework and whether there are any other mechanics which will help to avoid conflicts. Hope that your party will put forward any ideas you may have.

Future Marches

Understand anxieties about this year's marches yet to come. Must do all we can to encourage local agreement. Do you have any views?

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