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FROM: D J R HILL
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM
17 JULY 1996

Wms ~~See~~ 22/7
3 19/7

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 Thomas -B
Mr Legge -B
Mr Leach -B
Mr Bell -B
Mr Watkins -B
Mr Ray -B
Mr Wood (L&B) -B
Mr Beeton -B
Mr Stephens -B
Mr Maccabe -B
Ms Harrison -B
Mr Whysall -B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman -B
Mr Lamont - RID -B
HMA Dublin -B

PA
IGCRU

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

IGC, 18 JULY - BRIEF ON POLITICAL MATTERS

I attach a short brief on political matters and a suggested contribution for the communiqué.

2. By way of background, Ministers may wish to have to hand
- the draft agenda for the rest of the opening plenary drawn up by the two Governments on 20 June, which has been given to the UUP and SDLP today;
 - the analysis of UUP and SDLP proposals regarding the outstanding issues in the rules of procedure, circulated by Mrs McNally earlier this morning.

(signed)

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IGC, 18 JULY - POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Objectives

- To reassert HMG's commitment to the principle of parity of esteem and to the need for a balanced political accommodation which protects and acknowledges the interests and identity of both parts of the community in Northern Ireland.
- To agree a joint approach to any outstanding points on the rules of procedure and the agenda for the rest of the opening plenary; and to the handling of the talks over the next week.
- To send a positive public signal on the talks process in the communiqué and press conferences, but without giving Unionists (especially the DUP) any scope to claim that the two Governments are trying to dictate the way forward.
- To explore the implications of the Irish Government's meeting with Sinn Fein on 17 July.

Background

We are pressing Senator Mitchell and his colleagues to make all possible speed in promoting agreement between the UUP and SDLP on the rules of procedure; discussion between Michael Ancram and Mr Coveney earlier today revealed no differences between the two Governments but any new text emerging from the Independent Chairmen's negotiations with the UUP and SDLP may require consideration.

Michael Ancram hopes to secure a readout from the UUP on the agenda first thing tomorrow. Mr Coveney may get reactions from the SDLP later today. Our objective at the IGC should be to confirm/agree an agenda which could be circulated to the other delegates as a basis for discussion/approval, if necessary after a further round with the UUP and SDLP respectively.

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On timing, Michael Ancram and Mr Coveney encouraged Senator Mitchell to aim for a plenary on Monday afternoon for the purpose of adopting the rules of procedure and the agenda. He may need further encouragement, with the authority of the two Governments, to maintain the necessary timetable.

Irish officials are meeting Sinn Fein today. It would be helpful to know the upshot of that and its implications, if any, for the talks process. It may be that any Sinn Fein "demands" (eg for clear statements of commitment from the British Government) would in practice be met by the kind of language which we would in any event want to see in the communiqué, restating eternal verities. The Irish may have been pressed to allow Sinn Fein to join the talks now, on the basis of an alleged equivalence between Republican and Unionist threats of force, but having themselves raised the hurdle for Sinn Fein participation in the talks (after Garda McCabe, Clonastee and Manchester) the Irish should find it impossible to suggest anything weaker than the original 28 February requirement for an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire, especially after this week's finds in London.

The communiqué reference to the talks process will be important in underlining the two Governments' commitment and determination to work constructively together but it will be pored over by Dr Paisley and Mr McCartney at least for evidence of the two Governments attempting to stitch things up between them. I attach a suggested draft which seeks to pre-empt any such accusation by emphasising the two Governments' commitment to work with the other talks participants and the need to work for an agreed outcome.

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POSSIBLE COMMUNIQUE LANGUAGE

Political Matters

[The Secretary of State re-affirmed the British Government's fundamental commitment to exercise jurisdiction in Northern Ireland with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people of Northern Ireland in their diversity. He confirmed that its approach would continue to be based on full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights and freedom from discrimination for all citizens; on parity of esteem; and on just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspirations of both communities - Joint Framework Document, paragraph 20].

2. Looking to the future, the two Governments reaffirmed their absolute determination to do all in their power to promote and facilitate real progress in the multi-party talks and to help bring about, by agreement, a comprehensive political settlement which would tackle the root causes of intercommunal tension in Northern Ireland and underpin a lasting peace.

3. They undertook to work with Senator Mitchell and his colleagues and with the other talks participants to complete the necessary preliminary work on procedural issues and clear the way for an early address to substantive political matters, thus reasserting the primacy of peaceful, democratic methods over terror and intimidation. They drew attention to the fact that the talks process, with its wide participation and comprehensive agenda, provides a realistic and effective means of addressing all the major issues which need to be resolved if there is to be a peaceful accommodation between the two main political traditions. They noted that the agreed requirement that any outcome should be likely to secure the support of at least a majority in each of the two main political traditions in Northern Ireland should provide reassurance to both sides that their interests and identity will not be threatened.

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