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From: MARK ADAMS
Date: 29 September 1996

MR HOLMES

PRIME MINISTER'S CALLS ON NORTHERN IRELAND

PM took a few calls this afternoon about NI - from Paddy Mayhew and Robert Cranborne.

Paddy Mayhew said that he had spoken to Trimble on Friday, who had crumbled under pressure from the DUP and McCartney. Mayhew had shown Trimble the draft point of the opening plenary of the talks. Trimble had dismissed them as useless and had made clear he saw no entry for Sinn Fein until some decommissioning had taken place. Trimble was now back to seeking benchmarks and to the position of Washington 3.

Mayhew was trying to find out whether Trimble had concluded that the talks process should come to an end now or if there were specific concerns which could be addressed.

Some indications of Trimble's new mood were beginning to seep out, for example in that morning's Observer and Sunday Times. He was due to see Trimble again the next day, but also had in mind that the Prime Minister should speak to Trimble. He knew that separately Cranborne was speaking to Trimble - Mayhew was keeping in touch with Cranborne.

The PM asked if Mitchell knew of the new problems. Mayhew said he did, but was now returning to the US for three weeks to help Clinton. The PM asked

how Trimble's new mood would affect the Hume initiative. He was concerned that Trimble would now attack the Government over the initiative, although the Government was already committed to publishing the article that it had promised Hume. The PM was also concerned that if Trimble was effectively waiting to see what happened after the General Election, he might be minded to precipitate it. He asked Mayhew where the Government now stood on the Decommissioning Bill and the Northern Ireland ^{Grand} ~~Round~~ Committee. He suggested that he was contemplating mentioning both in his Party Conference speech. Mayhew said that both initiatives should proceed, whatever Trimble's game plan might be. He believed the initiatives would be helpful for internal Conservative Party reasons.

Finally, Mayhew concluded with an upbeat assessment of how the mood in the US was moving in the Government's favour.

Almost immediately afterwards, Lord Cranborne rang from, it seems, a hospital bed, where he has just had a knee operation. He said that he was likely to be in hospital for a further 4 or 5 days.

Cranborne wanted to check if the PM was aware of Trimble's mood. He said that Trimble seemed scared; he had rejected Mayhew's paper out of hand, but was not revealing precisely why. He seemed to have some hang up about the relationship between the Committee and the Commission.

Cranborne said that Trimble would be coming to see him on Tuesday. Cranborne would report back to the PM afterwards.

Pam Green

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