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S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 3352 P. 5/6

PHONE CALL WITH THE TAOISEACH: LINES TO TAKENorth Report

- Very difficult decision. North himself envisaged further consultation. Everyone agrees the key is local agreement - don't want to do anything which undermines prospect of that.
- Committed to setting up a Parades Commission with at least education/mediation role. Consultation on adjudicatory powers strictly time limited: keeping an open mind. If they are to help, any changes to the present system need to secure more widespread acceptance.
- Glad we were able to brief you in advance. Know you would have liked us to go further, but grateful for measured tone of your response. Given unionist fears, strident public comment by the Irish Government will only worsen the situation.

Bloody Sunday

- Understand the emotions still aroused. All agree, as I said in the House yesterday, this was a great tragedy which must never be repeated. As I have told John Hume, those who were shot should be regarded as innocent.
- As I said in the House, if there is fresh evidence, it will be examined: it should go to the proper authorities. But all this was investigated by Widgery and frankly sceptical that, 25 years on, a fresh enquiry would come any closer to the truth.

Belfast Talks

- The best basis for adjourning the talks and agreeing on their resumption after the election, is to secure progress now on decommissioning. Very difficult to achieve - but not yet impossible and we continue to explore with unionists and others the scope they see for progress.

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- Hope you agree that if there is any prospect of progress this side of the election, both Governments should pursue it vigorously. Most important neither of us gives the impression that we have already given up hope.
- But, of course, if it becomes clear there is no realistic prospect of progress, then we shall need to work closely with you and others to secure the safest possible basis for adjournment and resumption after the election. But premature to be working on this now.

Ceasefire

- What we know with certainty is that the IRA is currently intent on murder and mayhem in Northern Ireland. Good work by the security forces, and good luck, has frustrated some of their plans - but sooner or later they will kill people.
- Difficult to read their intentions over the elections. Whatever they plan, we shall stand by the approach of 28 November. Only a genuine ceasefire, intended to be lasting, will work and we will judge it by words and deeds.

(If raised)

- Aware that Hume still believes a ceasefire is possible. We have told him frankly that the approach he was working on (rewriting the Hume/Adams text of 10 October) was simply not a runner: know you agree.
- Of course we must not close our minds to an alternative approach which is genuine. Believe he is currently working on the idea of asking us questions about the 28 November statement. Always prepared to look seriously at Hume's ideas - but it must be clear we stand by the 28 November statement and will not move off it. Frankly, prospects for a ceasefire look pretty slim.

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