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File
John
9/6.

Prime Minister
To see this latest
NIO piece before tomorrow
morning's meeting. (It
arrived here at 2230!).
It may be a useful
device (the draft letter to
Sinn Fein), but I would

9 June 1997

go for a shorter, less
defensive text, and not
keep saying we have gone
beyond Sinn Fein's own
10 October text.

Previous papers

John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

Dear John

NORTHERN IRELAND: NEXT STEPS

attached.

Many thanks for your letter of 9 June. The Secretary of
State agrees with and welcomes the Prime Minister's
comments.

also
attached.

John
9/6.

My Secretary of State suggests that tomorrow's meeting
should therefore focus on the handling issues you raise.

On these, my Secretary of State shares the Prime
Minister's concerns about being seen to negotiate the
text of any speech or article. Nevertheless, she remains
convinced that, to secure support from the Irish and the
Americans and to get the best chance of a positive
response from the IRA, we need to set out the substance
of our position in writing in advance to these two
Governments and to Sinn Fein.

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Given the Prime Minister's concerns, however, she suggests that we do not show anyone outside of the Government the text of the Prime Minister's speech or article. That must be a text for us alone to work on, so that we can insist it has not been negotiated or cleared with anyone.

Instead, she suggests that officials should now write to Sinn Fein putting on the record the positions which they have already explained across the table in their meetings with Sinn Fein on the basis of the instructions Ministers gave them. They should also add the one final detail which they promised but did not fill in - the date or time period we have in mind. They would offer one further meeting to go through these positions in substance before the Prime Minister issued his speech or article. A draft of such a letter is attached.

The advantages are:

- we do not need to show the text of the Prime Minister's speech or article to anyone;
- the letter to Sinn Fein would primarily be a written record of what has already, on instructions, been said to them;

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- the adding of the time period we have in mind completes the picture so Sinn Fein know what we propose but are not being consulted about the terms in which it is announced;
- in the inevitable event of disputes about what was or was not said in these meetings the letter provides an authoritative account of the Government's position, protecting it from misrepresentation. If necessary, it could subsequently be published;
- we make it clear that there will only be one further meeting before our position is made public, so avoiding being drawn into an open-ended series of meetings.

Gameplan

So a revised gameplan might look like:

Tuesday/Wednesday

Write to Sinn Fein as
attached

Copy to Irish and US
Governments inviting their

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support in putting pressure
on Sinn Fein

Next Monday, possibly

Final meeting with Sinn
Fein before speech/article
issues

Later next week

Issue speech/article,
having briefed Trimble and
Hume carefully.

A copy goes to Jan Polley

Signed

W K LINDSAY

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