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FROM: TED HALLET
Political Development Team
30 October 1996

File
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cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/Malcolm Moss (DHSS, DOE & L) - B
PS/Baroness Denton (DED, DANI & L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Priestly - B
Mr Hill (B&L) - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Stephens - B
Ms Bharucha - B
Ms Mapstone - B
Mr Whysall (B&L) - B
Ms Collins, Cab Off (via IPL) - B
Mr Dickinson, TAU - B
Mr Lamont, RID FCO - B
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Mrs McNally (B&L) - B
Mr Holmes, No 10

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS: SUMMARY 29 OCTOBER 1996

The day consisted of a single plenary session at which the Irish Government and the Labour Party set out their positions on decommissioning. The Irish Minister for Justice, Mrs Owen, read out the speaking note previously circulated under cover of Mr Hill's note of 28 October (not to all), which set out the Irish position in familiar terms consistent with the approach set out in the two Governments' joint paper on decommissioning published on 1 October. The Labour Party presentation challenged the requirement for decommissioning in advance of an overall political settlement, arguing that no previous conflict had been resolved in this way. The Labour Party, nevertheless, accepted the International Body's proposals on decommissioning.

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At the conclusion of the Labour Party's presentation, the DUP, on a point of order, questioned the number of supporting officials accompanying the Irish delegation, citing Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure. The Chairman adjourned the plenary to determine the position. In a trilateral discussion with the two Government delegations during the adjournment, it was agreed that Rule 28 did not apply to the two Governments, but that they should voluntarily indicate a willingness to limit the number of supporting officials to a reasonable number. The British Government suggested that this should be 5, as envisaged in the Ground Rules of 6 June, which the Irish eventually accepted, with considerable reluctance. This "convention" was agreed after a brief discussion in the resumed plenary, which at times threatened to become acrimonious. Mr Robinson and Mr McCartney suggested that their parties would not have remained in the Talks if the Irish Government had not agreed to accept a limitation on the size of their delegation.

Bilateral discussions with the Irish came close to reaching agreement on the text of the British Government's paper on decommissioning to be tabled at the plenary session on 30 October. The Irish were also given a copy of the Secretary of State's speaking note.

Plenary discussion resumes on 30 October at 10.00 am with the Alliance Party presentation, a possible statement from the UUP and the British Government's presentation.

(Signed)

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