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FROM: D J R HILL  
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM  
18 NOVEMBER 1996

cc: PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B  
PS/PUS (L&B) - B  
PS/Sir David Fell - B  
Mr Thomas - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Leach - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Stephens - B  
Mr Wood (L&B) - B  
Mr Lavery - B  
Mr Perry - B  
Mr Maccabe - B  
Mr Priestly - B  
Mr Cornick - B  
Mr Whysall (L&B) - B  
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B  
Ms Mapstone - B  
Ms Bharucha - B  
Mr Lamont, RID - B  
HMA Dublin - B  
Mr Clarke, Dublin - B  
Mr Westmacott, W'ton via RID - B  
Mr Oakden, No 10 - B  
Ms Collins, Cab Off (via IPL) - B

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

**TALKS: HANDLING PLAN FOR TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER**

At this morning's briefing meeting we decided to stand by the approach reflected in the "possible fallback exit strategy" given to the Irish on 14 November and to seek to co-opt both the Irish and the UUP to it. We observed that even if neither side could be co-opted, HMG would be left well positioned in any endgame.

2. Our meetings today with both parties were difficult but not unpromising:

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- we were able to tackle some Irish misconceptions about the proposed approach and draw their attention to its various benefits and advantages. Mr Coveney clearly saw the attraction of the two Governments putting forward a revised, compromise proposal, rather than sticking to a position which the Unionists found "unacceptable"; and Mr O'hUiginn appeared to signal that if we could secure assurances of Unionist good faith the Irish would be prepared to look constructively at our proposed approach. However, he subsequently made clear to Mr Thomas that they continue to see significant inherent difficulties in it;
- in a combative meeting with the UUP we sketched out the proposed approach for the benefit of the wider delegation: Ken Maginnis was immediately attracted by the realisation of his own proposal for an inchoate Commission, and the scheme as a whole did not get the thumbs down; but Mr Trimble stressed that much would depend on the Commission's terms of reference and re-asserted the continuing importance of knowing "what arrangements would apply when Sinn Fein joined the process".

3. Our objectives for tomorrow might be to

- explore UUP reactions a little further, drawing on and perhaps even handing over the attached aide memoire;
- continue to urge the attractions of our proposed approach on the Irish (I will minute separately a long conversation I have just had with David Cooney: the main point is that I took some trouble to convince him that our proposed approach was not a cynical repositioning exercise but a genuine last ditch effort to secure forward movement in the talks and the early launch of the three strands).

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4. We may be able to co-opt both of them. If we can co-opt the UUP it would clearly strengthen our hand with the Irish. If neither is persuadable we retain the option of publishing our proposed approach next week to "challenge" both sides and/or as a statement of the position HMG would be prepared to rest on.

5. Additionally, the Independent Chairmen have asked to see the two Governments, possibly to reveal some of the thinking which General de Chastelain has done on possible ways forward.

(signed)

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM  
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## THE DECOMMISSIONING DEBATE: A POSSIBLE OUTCOME

Conditions for Sinn Fein's entry to the negotiations

- an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994;
- words, actions and circumstances would need to be consistent with any purported restoration of the ceasefire. It would be necessary to have regard to whether any paramilitary activity (including surveillance, targeting and weapons preparation) was continuing;
- sufficient time would be needed to ensure that the requirements of paragraphs 8 and 9 of Command Paper 3232 were met before Sinn Fein could be invited to participate in the negotiations. Developments which were incompatible with an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire or which would constitute a breach of the Mitchell principles would be taken into account;
- on entering the negotiations Sinn Fein would be required to affirm its total and absolute commitment to the Mitchell principles.

Handling Decommissioning during the Process of Negotiations

- establishment by International Agreement of an Independent Commission to work to secure all aspects of the report of the International Body [, including its compromise approach to decommissioning];
- establishment of a Liaison Committee to co-operate fully with the Independent Commission;

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- Commission to be charged to
  - prepare draft Decommissioning schemes;
  - determine the precise role of the Commission in respect of each draft scheme;
  - make recommendations regarding the detailed arrangements for decommissioning;
  - consider and make recommendations on other relevant aspects of the International Body's report;
  - offer a judgement, on the basis of implementing the International Body's compromise approach to decommissioning, on when decommissioning should start;
  - implement the detailed arrangements for decommissioning and verification in co-operation with the two Governments, and
  - draw to the attention of the Independent Chairmen, for circulation and for appropriate action by the two Governments, any participant who demonstrably fails to co-operate constructively and in good faith with the Commission
- Liaison Committee to be available for consultation by the Independent Commission, including in respect of modalities and on the conditions necessary for decommissioning, ie the circumstances in which mutual decommissioning would be expected to occur; to assist the Commission as required; and receive regular briefings;
- regular plenary reviews of progress in the negotiations as a whole;

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