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From: John Holmes
Date: 17 October 1997

PRIME MINISTER

TERRORISM LEGISLATION

You have not yet formally agreed to proposed changes to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, revocation of existing exclusion orders under the PTA, and issue in the New Year of a consultation document on new anti-terrorism legislation, drawing on Lord Lloyd's report last year. The papers which you have already seen are attached.

The Home Secretary has since decided he wants to make an Oral Statement to Parliament on its return, eg on 27 October, about the consultation document and exclusion orders. Mo would then introduce her Bill shortly afterwards, and be able to make clear that renewal of the Emergency Provisions is strictly temporary, pending new anti-terrorism legislation in the next session.

The obvious question for us is how this plays with the Unionists. The announcement will now come after the UUP Conference on 25 October, which is helpful. On the substance, the Unionists are not fussed about the exclusion orders. They have always objected to the principle that dangerous terrorists who are allowed to wander freely around Northern Ireland should be excluded from Britain. They should also not object in principle to the idea of new UK-wide counter-terrorism legislation – again they have always disliked separate laws in Britain and Northern Ireland – but they will be suspicious that this signals a Government about to go soft on terrorists. The one specific measure they will object to is removing powers of internment from the Emergency Provisions

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renewal. But Mo has effectively announced this already and, although you and I agree it is not really a good idea, we have also agreed that vetoing it at this stage is probably not worth the fight.

The problem with the whole package is that there is nothing in it for the Unionists, while there are things to welcome for the Nationalists. I am not sure there is much we can do about this in terms of the legislation itself. But we do need to try to balance things up if we can. Two thoughts:

- we should ensure Jack Straw's statement is very tough on terrorism, giving no room for any accusation that the Government are weakening for Northern Ireland peace process or any other reasons; ✓
- we tell Mo that you can only agree to dropping internment if she can find something, preferably but not necessarily in the same area, which would appeal to Unionists and which could be announced at the same time. There should be something from the CBMs list where she can make a further move, eg victims of violence. ✓

Agree? Content with the proposed timing? Any further steer?

John Yes. But
I want a list of
goodies for all
prior to 25th Dec.
I'd ever do another interview
we must do more
to keep them on
board

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