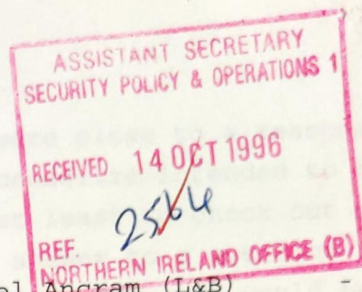


15/10/96 09:37 SSSC(1) FRTU DEF
FROM: Q J THOMAS
DUS (L)
POLITICAL DIRECTOR
14 OCTOBER 1996



DESK IMMEDIATE

cc: PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Ray - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Hill - B
Mr Maccabe - B
~~Mr Perry~~ - B
Mr Stephens - B
Ms Bharucha - B
Ms Mapstone - B
Mr Budd (Cab Office) via IPL - B
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Westmacott, via RID - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B

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

HUME/ADAMS: COMMENTS FROM MR O'hUIGINN

Mr O'hUiginn sought a word this afternoon about the latest Hume/Adams text. He referred to Mr Oakden's thoughtful composite text and so we continued our discussion with that on the table between us.

2. Mr O'hUiginn understood that the political context is difficult. But he wanted to say that though their understanding of the provisional movement is imperfect they believed this was a genuine attempt by the key leadership to bring about a new and genuine ceasefire. He understood that the text had indeed been through the Sinn Fein mill. Mr O'hUiginn secondly offered the view that the changes were at least within the ball park of acceptability. He volunteered that he understood the difficulties theologically of negotiating a text but he offered the view that the key theme was that the text should be fully in line with existing policy. With certain exceptions he thought this was the case.

3. In short Mr O'hUiginn believed that we were close to a reasonable text. He believed it could well produce a ceasefire intended to be permanent. He thought it would be as well at least to check out the seriousness with which it was advanced. In answer to a question he made clear that he would himself be meeting Sinn Fein and would be attempting to probe what lay behind the text and what room for manoeuvre on it there was.

4. Mr O'hUiginn then ran through the key verbal changes offering his comments on them. On the rule of consensus, on page 1, Mr O'hUiginn thought the sentence could be dropped. He understood that the omission was suggested merely as a point of tact. Sinn Fein did not want it to be made too obvious on the face of the text that they could be overridden. But the rules of procedure were well established and there was no intention to change them.

5. On the sentence elaborating "unequivocal restoration" on page 2 Mr O'hUiginn made clear that he would understand if the British side took the view that in present circumstances the additional sentence could not be dispensed with. He did however emphasise how important he thought it would be for the two Governments to have a clear understanding of precisely what they would do if there were an IRA statement purporting to make an unequivocal restoration. He repeated the point he had made to me last week that while the Irish Government might well be content to rest on 28th February model without qualification, they were likely to fall in with us if we were to suggest, say, a cooling off period of say 4 to 6 weeks between the announcement of a ceasefire and Sinn Fein's admission to talks. (This would of course occur only if the terrorism had clearly been brought to an end judged by events on the ground.)

6. On the reference to resolving decommissioning "without blocking the negotiations" Mr O'hUiginn noted that using this in a sentence which included the word "resolved" might well be difficult. He wondered whether we could not find a different formulation which included the word "blocking" which we both noted had been used in the Prime Minister's article in the Irish Times.

7. He thought the second reference to "without blocking the negotiations" on page 3 was unnecessary and was an example of Sinn Fein pushing their luck.

8. On the passage on page 3 which explains what the Mitchell "compromise approach" consists of Mr O'hUiginn unsurprisingly, argued that the words could well be omitted. He thought that British interests would be fully protected by the reference to implementing all aspects of the International Body's report.

9. Mr O'hUiginn did not think much was at issue in the proposals to amend the paragraph on page 3 concerning encouraging, facilitating and enabling agreement.

10. Mr O'hUiginn acknowledged that the time frame point was significant. He agreed that the two Governments could not claim to impose a time frame and that accordingly any time frame had to be agreed. He wondered whether we could not find words to convey the idea that the two Governments would see merit in an indicative time frame and that they would seek to promote it.

11. Mr O'hUiginn noted that the wording about equal treatment for both communities would need to be reworked to be consistent with British policy.

12. On the paragraph concerning policing on page 4 Mr O'hUiginn wondered whether we could not find words to suggest that we seek an outcome from the talks which would include a policing service enjoying the support of the entire community. He understood the sensitivity of any too blatant acknowledgement that the present police service might not have that support.

13. On the rhetorical reference in the final paragraph to Europe, the United States and South Africa, Mr O'hUiginn that while the European Union point might come from John Hume that the reference to the United States and South Africa might have more to do with Mr Adams.

He thought if we could make some sort of gesture to at least two of the three countries it would be helpful. But he clearly did not feel the point was of much significance.

14. On the exercise generally, Mr O'hUiginn ran the argument that it was possible that the politically inclined leadership (Adams and McGuinness) felt the need to make a move to a ceasefire soon. As long as the provisional movement was "at war" they were less able to control the military adventures of their colleagues. Once they were formally "at peace" they would be much more confident that their writ ran.

15. I mentioned that Mr Hume apparently thought that a guaranteed permanent cessation was on offer. Mr O'hUiginn expressed scepticism whether those words would be used, though he could see the value they would have if they were. But he certainly thought that a serious ceasefire was in prospect. He urged us to take the exercise seriously.

16. Mr O'hUiginn was also fearful of the alternative. He repeated his anxiety - expressed to me last week - that the Theipval bomb might not be a signing off bomb but the first of a very violent new campaign. He thought it possible that if events went that way the "politicos" in the movement might drift away from it - Adams to literature, McGuinness to fishing.

17. I thanked Mr O'hUiginn for his comments. I explained that Ministers would want to reflect very carefully on the text. I pointed out, as he readily acknowledged, that the timing could hardly be less propitious.

(signed)

Q J THOMAS
POLITICAL DIRECTOR