

CONFIDENTIAL

ASSISTANT SECRETARY
SECURITY POLICY & OPERATIONS 1

FROM: PS/SECRETARY OF STATE
16 October 1996

RECEIVED 16 OCT 1996

REF. 2648

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE (B)

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Ray - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Hill (B&L) - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Cornick - B

42/006
a (17)

Mr Stephens - B

HUME/ADAMS: PAPER FOR NI

The Secretary of State held a stocktake meeting yesterday afternoon on the VCR, primarily to discuss the draft paper for NI, now arranged for 17 October. Also present were Sir John Wheeler, Michael Ancram, PUS, Sir David Fell, Mr Thomas, Mr Steele, Mr Shannon, Mr Bell, Mr Watkins, Mr Wood, Mr Maccabe, Mr Perry, Mr Cornick and yourself. The meeting had your papers of 11 October on the latest Hume/Adams text and 14 October; also available was Mr Cornick's submission of 11 October on the Northern Ireland Information Strategy.

2. The Secretary of State said that, on first reading, the revised text sent to No 10 by Mr Hume, which incorporated Adams' amendments, contained sufficient variation as to make it very difficult for us. PUS suggested that, while it may be impossible as it stood, it could be amended and stay within HMG's policy. Mr Thomas took the meeting through the composite text of 10 October which incorporated the Hume/Adams amendments. While some of the amendments were clearly unacceptable - 'the creation of a policing service' - others could be accommodated with further amendment. While HMG could not negotiate on its position, there was room for manoeuvre in the language used.

CONFIDENTIAL

SOFS/32077

CONFIDENTIAL

3. Michael Ancram said that the text used had to be consistent with the instruction given by NI and had to be viewed against the HQNI bombings. He noted (para 3 of your submission) that there were significant areas where no change had been sought - the reference to consent; the requirement for an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire; the need to make a commitment to the Mitchell principles; the reference to the two Governments looking for the commitment of all participants to work constructively during the negotiations to implement all aspects of the Mitchell report; the dropping of virtually all the republican 'wish list' of confidence building measures; and the reference to an end to punishment beatings and other paramilitary activities, including surveillance and targetting, as demonstrating real commitment to peaceful methods. Adams had apparently accepted all these changes which were made to his previous text.

4. Turning to the options in para 11 of the draft NI paper the following points were made:-

- option 1 - if we told Hume that the initiative was at an end and we were not going to do anything further with it, there was a possibility that the SDLP would not stay in the talks; there was no chance of carrying through non-inclusive talks to a successful conclusion; and Hume would suffer electorally if Sinn Fein were not in the talks;
- the text of 11 October did not constitute any departure from our policy, although it could be portrayed in that way;
- option 2, - delay, saying that the present climate made any initiative impossible; Hume was pushing No 10 for a response and therefore any delay carried with it a danger. However, it was felt reasonable to take a week or 10 days to respond to something which in itself had taken that time to come back after 27 September - that would give time to talk, after NI, to the Irish, the Americans and the Unionists;

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- any delay ran the risk of another incident occurring, therefore it would be prudent to go back to Hume after NI to say that a response would be forthcoming as quickly as possible, but any incident in the meantime would make things even more difficult than the Thiepval bombings had;
- a significant delay with serious incidents in the interim could provoke loyalists to take action and risk a slide back into full scale violence;
- PIRA/Sinn Fein played the dual strategy very skilfully - they were probably planning further attacks even now. However, if HMG held back, then the blame for any full scale resumption could switch back to HMG;
- while there was not much likelihood of the republican movement changing their dual strategy, HMG needed to maintain the integrity of the talks and had to test the Hume/Adams initiative to destruction;
- the objective was to keep the talks process going and keep Hume/Adams in play; in the meantime, talk to the Unionists and the Irish about a re-entry strategy for Sinn Fein (though it was unlikely the Irish would accept such a strategy until Hume/Adams was concluded).

Summary

5. It was agreed that the text returned from Hume was unacceptable. However, it was amendable without changing HMG's stated position. If Hume came back, he should be told that Ministers needed to consult colleagues, but that the market would not bear much more, especially since Thiepval. Any further atrocities would be very damaging. The gameplan would be to present NI with an illustrative text consistent with our policy, to be used in due course and in the meantime to set out an entry strategy for Sinn Fein into talks.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Information Strategy

6. It was agreed that NI would be given an indication of the sort of document which the committee would produce for NI members, but say little about overall strategy at this stage. In order to forestall possible criticism, it was also agreed to try and set up an initial meeting of the committee under the Chairmanship of Sir John Wheeler on Wednesday 16 October.

Security Response to Thiepval

7. A separate paper to NI would include an indication of the type of security measures re-introduced since the bombings on 7 October. Private Office should alert the Defence Secretary through the Cabinet Office that he would need to be prepared to say something about the lapse of security at Thiepval Barracks.

Prisoners

8. The need to 'do something' for loyalist prisoners now featured in comments from David Trimble, Andrew Hunter, some of the Americans, the Irish; even No 10 were becoming increasingly unconvinced at why nothing could be done. The Secretary of State noted that, while some relaxation had been made, these were not model prisoners - they were still threatening prison officers and each prisoner had been sentenced for serious offences. It was agreed that Sir John Wheeler should see Andrew Hunter to set the record straight on what had been done for prisoners. Mr Shannon would produce a response for No 10 showing what had been done and setting out the difficulties of doing more.

(Signed)

W K LINDSAY
Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL