

From: John Holmes
Date: 14 November 1997

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
ACT 2000

1. The next step is a meeting with Trimble on Tuesday afternoon. You might like to look over the weekend at the attached NIO paper, not because it is much use as a brief for the meeting itself, but because it brings out some key points:
- a) the need to encourage Trimble to stay engaged with the talks, the other parties and the NIO,
 - b) the encouraging conversation last week between Donaldson and Murphy, confirming UUP readiness to consider significant north/south arrangements in the context of a wider east/west set up and a change to the Irish constitution;
 - c) the equally encouraging fact that the UUP and the Irish are beginning to talk seriously. Trimble is meeting Ahern in Brussels on Thursday;
 - d) the possibility that decommissioning will rear its ugly head again in the next few weeks in the context of the review plenary at the beginning of December;

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From: John Hume
To: Mr. McGuinness

THEIR MINISTER

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ACT 200

The next step is a meeting with Tammie in Dublin, tomorrow. You might like to look over the material in the attached XLS paper, and because it is quite long, as a guide for the meeting itself, but because it brings out some key points.

a) the need to encourage Tammie to stay engaged with the talks, the other parties and the UN.

of the continuing conversation has a role between Derry and the other parties, including the DUP, towards to ensure significant progress with implementation is the context of a wider context set up and a change to the Irish constitution.

the agenda, the meeting that the DUP and the Irish are beginning to talk seriously. Tammie is meeting with the DUP in London on Thursday.

the meeting and administration will have its own head again in the next few weeks in the context of the review process in the Department of Education.

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letter dated 14/11/97

- the continuing speculation about resignations from the IRA. Our best assessment, and that of the Irish, is that this is a significant problem for the Sinn Fein leadership but is still containable. But it is difficult to be sure.

I will produce a speaking note for Trimble before you speak to him. He will be particularly interested in what you have learned from the SDLP about their position. The SDLP were vague. But I think you can say to him that, as long as the UUP are prepared to accept a north/south body with relevant powers, the SDLP are prepared to accept the idea of a wider east/west context. They may also accept a change to the override powers in Strand 3. But there may be a real difficulty if the UUP insist that any north/south body must itself be firmly placed under an east/west Strand 3 umbrella.


You will incidentally need to meet Ahern for a few minutes in the margins of the Job Summit, probably immediately before lunch, as you did in Strasbourg. It is always important for the Irish domestically to say that you have met. It is also important in the present circumstances for us to keep this channel functioning, and to let Ahern know how we see things, following your meetings with the SDLP and UUP. The Irish attitude to the east/west dimension ideas remains very open, and working relations continue to be excellent.

Mo is incidentally very fed up that you don't want her there when you see Trimble. She says it seriously undermines her position, and encourages Trimble to treat her and the NIO with contempt. She is right, but you know that and believe (I think rightly) that it is still more important for you to keep Trimble in

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the game. Mo is still in the US/Canada on Tuesday anyway, but will press hard to come to the next Trimble meeting. I attach a note she left for you.



JOHN HOLMES

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- The Prime Minister's objectives might be to:
- (a) ~~Remind~~ Mr Trimble in his efforts to use the current round of transatlantic consultations to develop constructive bilateral relationships with the ULP and Irish Government respectively;
 - (b) ~~Ask~~ him to make clear in the Irish Government that the ULP would be prepared to ~~contemplate~~ significant Irish/Irish agreements in the context of Irish constitutional reform and the establishment of machinery to reflect the "equality of relationships" within these islands and beyond etc;
 - (c) ~~Press~~ him to ensure that decentralising decisions is envisaged as a real block at the final plenary set for 1-3 December.

Our current assessment of the state of the negotiations remains as set out in the annex to the paper being attached for ease of reference. Again, the last week has seen some significant progress.

Several officials have indicated that they might be ready to consider a "first round" of a kind favoured by the ULP. This would still be significant, but there is

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