

CONFIDENTIAL

File R-16/12.

From: John Holmes
Date: 5 December 1997

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND

I have not yet heard back from Trimble on the Heads of Agreement text, but will press him again tomorrow morning (Saturday). Meanwhile I attach the latest text, for use in any 'phone call you may have with him. I think we need to continue to press him not to back away from the exercise. I hope we can do this successfully without also losing the North-South language.

If you talk to Trimble, you might confirm to him that you plan to talk to the media yourself after the Adams meeting, probably in TV interviews, to ensure he does not have the airwaves to himself.

Ahern is in Belfast on Monday, and will be seeing Trimble then. For the rest, action on prisoners continues, and is having a beneficial effect on the Irish, and hopefully on Sinn Fein too.

There is an obvious danger that the CAC or INLA may mount an attack on the eve of the Adams visit, with the aim of causing maximum disruption to the peace process and maximum confusion. They may calculate that the unionist and other reaction will be such that you would have to call off the meeting with Adams, or risk the unionists walking out of the talks. If you did call it off, this could help provoke a return to violence on the republican side.

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Obviously our reaction would depend on the nature of the incident and any indications of who carried it out. But we would need to try hard not to be blown off course if at all possible.

Sorry to be gloomy – and I have seen no specific evidence that such an incident is planned/likely – but it is as well to be psychologically prepared.



JOHN HOLMES