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Top Sec  
cc: PS  
JP  
AC

FROM: PS/SECRETARY OF STATE  
9 December 1997

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - O  
PS/Mr Murphy (B&L) - O  
PS/PUS (B&L) - O  
PS/Mr Semple - O  
Mr Thomas - O  
Mr Steele - O  
Mr Bell - O  
Mr Watkins - O  
Mr Hill - O  
Mr Maccabe - O  
Mr Brooker - O  
Mr Ferguson - O  
Mr Whysall - O  
Mr Holmes, No 10

Mr Stephens - O

#### MEETING WITH TAOISEACH

The Secretary of State met Mr Ahern for about 10 minutes yesterday evening, at the end of his one day visit to Northern Ireland. He was accompanied by David Andrews, Martin Mansergh and Paddy Teahon. You and I were with the Secretary of State.

2. The Taoiseach expressed his thanks for the arrangements made for the visit and also for the way the RUC had handled it. He was clearly pleased with the day and particularly the meeting with David Trimble, though he made the comment that some in the UUP delegation appeared not to know exactly what was going on.

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3. In relation to the proposal to table a key issues document, the Taoiseach commented that the UUP appeared to be unhappy with the idea of a paper being deployed before Christmas because it could all unravel. He had confirmed to Trimble that the Irish Government would not be putting in a paper. He said that it would be the worst of all worlds if both Governments and perhaps the UUP put in their own papers, because it would cause considerable confusion in the talks.

4. The Secretary of State said that a paper on the key issues would be ready for deployment the following day and it was our understanding that Trimble had agreed in principle to it being deployed. The Prime Minister thought it was a way of keeping the UUP locked into the process. Mr Teahon said that if, for instance, policing was listed as a key issue, the UUP might find it difficult to live with the press comment on that for the 3 or 4 week recess. He suggested that it pointed to putting the paper in during the first week in January.

5. You said that there were two reasons for doing it now, first, it gave a visible sign of progress and second, it would set the context for the meeting with Sinn Fein on Thursday. The Taoiseach commented that what was good for Thursday may not look so good on the Monday following when there could be 'chaos' if the two Governments and the UUP had put in papers. The rest of the participants would feel that they were being ignored. Martin Mansergh said that if the document was deployed on Wednesday then Sinn Fein would reject it on Thursday. He

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referred to the work going on in the Liaison Group and wondered where this now stood. The Taoiseach commented that the Irish document had only been seen by HMG and he did not want to bounce the SDLP or Sinn Fein. He again reiterated that he did not want to get over Thursday and have a mess to come back to on Monday. Paddy Teahon said that Sinn Fein would have the most difficulty with all of this.

6. The Secretary of State undertook to reflect the comments made to No 10 and the Irish side indicated that they may also make contact on the Teahon/Holmes net.

7. Finally the Secretary of State mentioned the Hague Preference and pressed the Taoiseach for some reaction to our paper. The Taoiseach agreed that it was important to move this and suggested that the best way forward was to invite Mr Woods to a meeting to discuss it. (Perhaps **Mr Bell** could make sure this happens.)

*W K Lindsay*

W K LINDSAY

Private Secretary

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