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H₂/2 -

PRIME MINISTER

From: John Holmes
Date: 22 January 1998

cc: Jonathan Powell
Alastair Campbell
Philip Barton

w/e bar

NORTHERN IRELAND

Another shooting in Belfast tonight. The victim is still alive – another Catholic in a random attack.

Politically, the situation has not moved on since we last spoke. Apart from Alderdice, the other main parties are being cautious about what they say on the UDP and continued participation in the talks. Mo has not had much success today in contacting eg the PUP or the Irish. I suspect most people are keeping their heads down and waiting to see how things develop. But we will have to take a decision about how to handle the UDP in the next 48 hours.

Mo's instinct remains to go easy on them, especially if she can extract from them a reasonably vigorous statement of opposition to the shootings. I think we must be more robust than this, for the reasons Alderdice gave. Paddy Teahon told me this evening that the Irish certainly don't want the UDP thrown out, but think they need to be confronted and told to use their influence properly (and they do have some). Carpeting them may be the next step.

You need to speak to Trimble and Hume tomorrow, as we discussed. With Trimble the main point is that he must stay in the process whatever the Loyalist paramilitaries do. He will wrong-foot himself in a big way if he pulls out, as

well as leaving the ground in the possession of Sinn Fein. There is so far no comparison between the position of the UDP and Sinn Fein, even if the IRA is not totally inactive (eg punishment shootings).

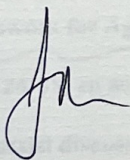
You might also need to ask Trimble about Strand 2 and the possibility of an Anglo-Irish paper being tabled next week. I attach the latest draft of a British paper (which he has not seen and which you should not refer to). A lot of it is cleverly drafted, in the conditional tense and leaving options. But there are still bits which the Unionists will hate, for example on defining implementation powers more closely, suggesting the North-South Council itself might have them, and particularly a paragraph reintroducing from the Framework Document the idea that the two Governments might have to act if the arrangements do not work (the famous "override").

Mo has said that Trimble is aware we might table a paper and is reasonably relaxed. I wonder, particularly if it is an Anglo-Irish paper - which would need to be a good deal greener than the draft attached. Paddy Teahon said tonight that the Irish cannot accept a draft on our lines since it would simply push Sinn Fein out. He strongly shares my doubts about a joint paper - the issue is just too sensitive. I will talk to the NIO tomorrow. Do you agree we should seek to ditch the exercise?

With Hume, the main point is to keep him tied into the Heads of Agreement paper, and stop him drifting off with Sinn Fein. He has been pretty good so far, but the pressures are always there.

I have asked the Americans whether a call to Clinton tomorrow is possible. They have not yet come back, but have suggested that the pressures on his time in advance of the State of Union address on Tuesday, and with Middle East talks and all his personal problems, are considerable. But he will want to do it if he can. I have meanwhile urged the Americans yet again to be robust with Sinn Fein. They say they are being, privately and publicly.

On Bloody Sunday, we are trying desperately to stop anything leaking. No paper about today's meeting will go round. Derry has talked at some length this afternoon to Brian Wilkinson, in the absence of Tom Bingham. Apparently he reacted well. Their first choice to lead an inquiry is Mark Savill. But Derry will not approach him until Monday. Wilkinson was pessimistic about the possibility of attracting a senior Commonwealth judge - why should they take the security risk or want to spend a year in Britain? But our law lord could be flanked by eminent people, rather than judges.



JOHN HOLMES

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