

CONFIDENTIALDco
file mel

From: John Holmes
Date: 15 February 1998

PRIME MINISTER

cc: Jonathan Powell
Alastair Campbell

SINN FEIN

Despite our advice to the contrary, the Irish have continued to press Sinn Fein for fresh words. I attach the latest text which they have sent to Mo of something Adams would be ready to say if we thought this would be helpful. She is not much impressed by it. Neither am I, although the disavowal of recent killings is a bit of a step forward.

Mo is also under pressure on two other fronts, from Dublin and Washington, on the assumption that Sinn Fein have to be put out of the talks. The first is how long the expulsion should last. The Irish are pressing for it to be made clear and public that we have in mind 4 weeks. I have said that it seems to me best not to say anything formally and publicly, but to suggest to Sinn Fein informally that, while there must be general parallelism with the UDP, a period of 4-5 weeks seems most likely, if there are no more killings.

The other issue is Adams' proposed visit to Washington towards the end of the month. People like King are pressing that Adams should still be allowed to see Clinton, so this will be important in keeping Sinn Fein on board by avoiding humiliation. I have said that, while this is a decision for the Americans, not us, it seems to me that for Clinton to see Adams after Sinn Fein have been thrown out would look odd, and in particular give the impression that the Americans did not agree with our views/action. On the other hand, I saw no reason why we

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

needed to press the Americans actually to refuse Adams a visa. If he went to Washington and saw eg Steinberg, we could probably live with that. In practice, I doubt whether Adams would go to Washington in these circumstances.

Mo may be engaged in further discussions/negotiations with the Irish about these points overnight. She therefore needs a steer on your views and bottom lines. You could speak to her direct, or I could do so again on your behalf. How do you react to the above points? You may like to have a word on the phone.

me

for **JOHN HOLMES**

fsinnsunday mel

CONFIDENTIAL