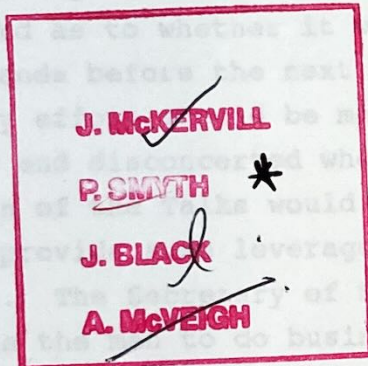
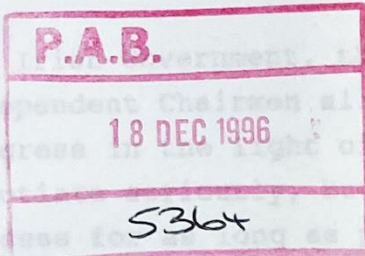


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B/g.

FROM: TED HALLETT
17 DECEMBER 1996



Do you agree with x?
NO!
C 18/12

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/Malcolm Moss (DHSS, DOE & L) - B
PS/Baroness Denton (DED, DANI & L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Brooker - B
Mr Hill (B&L) - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Priestly - B
Ms Bharucha - B
Ms Mapstone - B
Mr Whysall (B&L) - B
Ms Collins, Cab Off (via IPL) - B
Mr Dickinson, TAU - B
Mr Lamont, RID FCO - B
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Jones, HO (via IPL) - B
Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Mrs McNally (B&L) - B
Mr Holmes, No 10

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS SUMMARY: 17 DECEMBER 1996

There was an official level bilateral with the Irish Government in the morning. In the afternoon, the Secretary of State and Michael Ancram met the UUP, the Alliance Party, the SDLP and the Independent Chairmen.

All were agreed that there was no prospect of reaching

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agreement on decommissioning before the Christmas break. The aim therefore should be to adjourn the talks on as positive a note as possible with a view to a resumption in the New Year.

The Irish Government, the Alliance Party, the SDLP and the Independent Chairmen all expressed pessimism about the prospects for progress in the light of the UUP's perceived unwillingness to negotiate seriously, but agreed that it was better to sustain the process for as long as possible, rather than allow a vacuum to develop.

In his meeting with the UUP, the Secretary of State pressed Mr Taylor hard as to whether it would be possible to move into the three strands before the next election. Mr Taylor appeared to agree that every effort should be made to do so. The UUP appeared surprised and disconcerted when it was pointed out to them that any suspension of the Talks would also involve suspension of the Forum. This may provide some leverage in encouraging them to continue with the Talks. The Secretary of State concluded from the meeting that Taylor was the man to do business with. X

There was general agreement that the Independent Chairmen should propose tomorrow that the Talks should resume with informal bilaterals on 13 January, with a formal resumption in Plenary on 27 January. In the meantime, the Chairmen would deliberate on proposals to resolve the decommissioning issue.

(Signed)

TED HALLETT

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