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POLITICAL AFFAIR
DIVISION
12 NOV 1996
N.I.O. BELFAST

From: Ted Hallett
FCO
11 November 1996

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&L) - 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 Priestly - B
Mr Hill (B&L) - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Macgabh - B
Mr Perry - 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
EMA Dublin - B
Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Mrs McNally (B&L) - B
Mr Holmes, No 10

J. McNeill ✓
P. O'Neill
J. Blair
A. McNeill

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS: SUMMARY 11 NOVEMBER 1996

The day's business consisted of bilateral meetings with the Alliance Party and the United Kingdom Unionist Party.

2. At the meeting with the Alliance Party, the Secretary of State sought clarification of the proposal in the Alliance paper on decommissioning for the matter to be handed over to a reconstituted international commission. He also asked how they proposed to sell this proposal to the other parties. The Alliance Party indicated their intention to seek early meetings with the UUP and the SDLP.

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They had already had informal indications from both parties that the response might not be unfavourable. They saw a bigger problem with the Irish who, in their view, were concentrating on pursuing an illusory attempt to bring Sinn Fein into the Talks process.

3. On the substance of their proposal, the Alliance Party made clear that they saw this as the only way progress on the issue could be made. It would be "madness" to seek to do this through a committee on which all the parties were represented. An independent commission would provide a mechanism on which all parties could agree for taking forward decommissioning while allowing progress to be made in the three stranded political talks.

4. In the bilateral with the UKUP, Mr McCartney sought the Secretary of State's views on the likelihood of a ceasefire and clarification of the conditions which would be set for judging its durability. He made clear that for the UKUP, an IRA ceasefire would have to be "permanent", with delivery of a first "tranche" of weapons, before Sinn Fein could be admitted to the political process. There followed a repetitious debate in which Mr McCartney seemed to be arguing that, while not seeking definitely to exclude Sinn Fein from the process, they could in practice only be brought in by a series of concessions which would never be acceptable to the Unionist community. He appeared, however, to be slightly more flexible and amenable to counter-arguments than has been evident in Plenary sessions.

(Signed)

TED HALLETT

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