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FROM: PETER DICKINSON
Talks Administrator
7 November 1996

MR HILL

HANDLING OF POSSIBLE FUTURE SINN FEIN PROTESTS AT BLOCK B

1. As requested, I have dusted down our existing operational plan for handling any possible future protests from Sinn Fein. As part of this exercise I have consulted fully with the local RUC Superintendent with responsibility for the Stormont Estate who is content with the attached proposals.
2. The decision, to either terminate any protest at the outer compound gates, or allow a small delegation into the media village area and into Block B will be influenced by the political circumstances existing at the time.
3. Subject to your approval it may be prudent to circulate this plan, under separate cover seeking any comments from those colleagues who formed the working group, chaired by Mr Legge, to devise the initial plan used on 11 June. SPOB in particular played an important co-ordination role on that and subsequent occasions and their continued involvement will be most welcome.

(SIGNED)

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1. This plan was originally drawn up to deal with protest action on 11 June and subsequently modified prior to the re-commencement of Inter-Party Talks on 9 September, it sets out how our deal with a large number of protestors arriving at the Stormont Estate seeking admittance to Block B, Castle Buildings.
2. The plan assumes the arrival of a number of vehicles at one of the vehicular entrances to the Stormont Estate. As in the past, it is anticipated that the RUC will be able to give an early indication as to when any cavalcade will arrive and the vehicular entrance likely to be used.
3. DFP Security Guards, supported by RUC personnel, will close the main gates at the vehicular entrance to prevent any vehicles in the cavalcade from entering the Estate. The occupants of the vehicles will be advised that they can proceed into the Estate on foot.
4. This group will be allowed to proceed, accompanied by RUC/DOE Rangers, to the outer carpark gates at Block B where a cordoned-off area has been created to facilitate any peaceful protest. Close to their arrival at the outer gates the Press will be invited to move out of the carpark/Press Village to facilitate media coverage.

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5. On 10 June we permitted a small delegation to proceed via the Press Village to our inner compound and into Block B where PS/Secretary of State and an Irish Government official were waiting in the level 3 committee room to hand over a prepared statement on behalf of the two Governments to Sinn Fein officials. Simultaneously, Mr Wood read out the same statement to the media assembled in the Press Village area. Having received the views of both Governments the Sinn Fein delegation moved out of Block B to the Press Village area to conduct media interviews.
6. On two subsequent occasions Sinn Fein protestors were allowed to proceed on foot through the public area of the Estate as far as an RUC checkpoint marking the beginning of the Restricted area outside the Parliament Buildings carpark. They were not allowed to proceed to Block B. The main reason for this change of tactic was that the position of the two Governments was unchanged and there was, therefore, no point in a re-run of 10 June scenario - delegation conducted into Block B, meet Officials etc.
7. If and when we have another Sinn Fein protest and the two Governments have a different message to give them, and we can identify suitable officials to deliver such a message both inside and outside Block B, we can consider re-running the 10 June operational plan. On the other hand if we have nothing new to say we can operate the plan devised for 9 September which envisaged any protest terminating at the cordoned-off area opposite the outer compound gates at Block B.

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8. Issues to be decided:

- who decides whether protestors are held at outer compound gates or admitted to inner compound to building;
- who delivers messages at Block B and what is said.

2. We have been talking on similar lines and CPL are asking down their files on chairman. The position may in fact be even worse than you suggest. On one line of policy development we might lose General de Chastelain to look after decommissioning in which case we may need a new chairman of Strand 2 who might or might not be the same person as any new chairman of Plenary.

3. Although we say, as you suggest, fall in with the idea that we should need a new chairman of Plenary and that it should be an American I dare say we should make the Irish side work to persuade us of this. We could run the argument that Mr. Moller and General de Chastelain between them manage the process for four or five weeks through October and that it is not clear that it was worth bringing in a newcomer at this stage. But I suspect that in the end we should agree gracefully that another American would be a good idea and that for this reason it is indeed right that we should start with IIS and our Washington Embassy to identify possible candidates. There may be several people in Washington out of who very good.

(10/10/89)

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