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RECEIVED 20 NOV 1996

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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE (D)

FROM: TED HALLETT
19 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
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 Maccabe - 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
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Mrs McNally (B&L) - B
Mr Holmes, No 10

cu(A)

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS: SUMMARY RECORD 19 NOVEMBER 1996

The day's business consisted of ministerial-level bilaterals with the UUP, the SDLP and the Alliance Party in the morning and an official-level bilateral with the Irish in the afternoon.

At the UUP meeting, Michael Ancram outlined the UK proposals on the conditions for Sinn Fein's entry into the process and the handling of decommissioning.

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The UUP avoided giving a direct answer as to whether the latter were likely to provide a basis on which they would agree to move to the three stranded talks, but agreed to reflect. They made clear that the handling of decommissioning and the conditions for Sinn Fein's entry were inextricably linked and that they could not, in practice, envisage a situation arising in which they would actually sit down and talk to Sinn Fein. This could only happen on the basis of a truly "permanent" ceasefire with Sinn Fein irrevocably committed to democratic methods. They reiterated their requirement for a commitment to prior decommissioning and delivery of a first tranche of weapons before Sinn Fein could be admitted to substantive negotiations. The meeting provided further confirmation that the UUP are seeking an exclusive process without wishing to say so explicitly. They gave an optimistic account of their discussions with the SDLP, with whom they claim to be able to do business.

The SDLP gave a different view at their meeting with Michael Ancram. They said that little progress had in fact been made and that they doubted the UUP's good faith and serious intent to move to substantive discussions. The problem was compounded by the UUP fielding different teams at each meeting and the different participants appearing not to communicate with each other.

At the Alliance meeting, Lord Alderdice rehearsed his familiar argument that the talks process was being obstructed by the Irish Government's illusory strategy of seeking a restored ceasefire. It was clear, although Lord Alderdice did not say so in terms, that he is looking for an exclusive process, with the abandonment of any attempt to bring Sinn Fein in.

A long official level bilateral meeting was held with the Irish in the afternoon. The discussion was more good natured than other recent exchanges but the Irish reiterated their objections to our proposed decommissioning exit-strategy on familiar lines. On Hume-

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Adams, they made clear that, in their view, the conditions existed for a restoration of the ceasefire and that it was for the British Government to take the necessary steps to achieve this.

(Signed)

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