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FROM: QUENTIN THOMAS  
POLITICAL DIRECTOR  
25 NOVEMBER 1996  
QT/MR/2816

PS/MICHAEL ANCRAM(L&B)

cc PS/Secretary of State(L&B)  
PS/Sir John Wheeler(L&B)  
PS/PUS(L&B)  
PS/Sir David Fell  
Mr Steele  
Mr Ray  
Mr Bell  
Mr Leach  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Stephens  
Mr Hill(L&B)  
Mr Perry  
Mr Maccabe  
Mr Beeton  
Mr Whysall(L&B)  
Mr Lavery  
Ms Mapstone  
HMA Dublin  
Mr Lamont RID/FCO  
Mr Budd Cabinet Office-FAX  
Mr Holmes No.10-FAX

HUME/ADAMS: A WORD WITH MR O hUIGINN

As you know, at the end of the meeting this morning with the Irish Government and the Independent Chairmen, I had a private word with Mr O hUigininn.

2. He told me that the Irish Government, including the Tanaiste and the Taoiseach, had met yesterday to consider the Prime Minister's letter with the text of Hume/Adams. They were all agreed that in its present form it would not work. There was, in their judgement, no way in which Sinn Fein could submit themselves to an open-ended and indeterminant process whereby the Secretary of State would determine whether or not they passed the test.

3. Mr O hUigininn said that the Irish side could see that we had tried on a number of matters to be constructive. But on this central issue the approach would not work. Unless there could be immediate entry, and I confirmed that there was no way in which after the Thiepval bomb that could be achieved, the only possible fall back he could see was one which involved the passage of time, probably over a

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Christmas adjournment, with reconvening perhaps at the end of January (he said he hoped it would not go into February) when Sinn Fein could expect to join the Talks, assuming their words and actions and all the circumstances were consistent with a ceasefire.

4. Mr O hUiginn said, in answer to a question, that they would be pressing Sinn Fein hard about the possibility of giving a clearer indication of the terms of any ceasefire declaration. He mentioned the possibility of small steps towards the consent principle, but perhaps not enough for others to see them as significant. He also suggested that what McGuinness had said on decommissioning - that it should be settled to the satisfaction of all the participants in the process - was about as good as you could expect to get. Mr O hUiginn said that Paddy Teahon would be conveying to No.10 the initial reaction and the hope that nothing unilateral or immediate was done to put the text in the public domain. If that happened the Irish side believed that Sinn Fein would take it as indicating that the British Government were not serious but were merely taking a tactical move to force a fullscale resumption of violence.

5. I said that we owed a response to the request, which he conveyed to me last week, from Sinn Fein for a meeting. I said that we had not ignored or forgotten this. Whether or not the Secretary of State would accede to this request would depend on Sinn Fein's initial response to our text. There would not be automatic agreement. It would of course be on the usual terms that it would be exploratory and explanatory and would not involve negotiation. Mr O hUiginn thought that Sinn Fein were sufficiently serious about trying to find a way through that they would seek a meeting.

6. It seems clear that the Irish side will be pressing Sinn Fein to look at the text positively; will be pressing again for a better indication of things which Sinn Fein or the IRA could say to provide comfort to HMG; and will of course be exploring the possibility of

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bridging the gap they believe exists to prevent a ceasefire in response to the text sent them last week.

[SIGNED]

Q THOMAS  
POLITICAL DIRECTOR (L)

CC PS/Secretary of State L.B  
PS/John Wheeler L.B  
PS/Michael A. Aronson L.B  
PS/PUS  
PS/Mr David Fell  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Steele  
Mr Ray  
Mr Bell  
Mr Lench  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Stephens  
Mr Hill  
Mr Perry  
Mr Macaulay  
Mr Brown  
Mr Lavery  
Mr Maguire  
Baker