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File
JH 17/12.

From: JOHN HOLMES
Date: 25 November 1996

PRIME MINISTER

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

As you know, Michael Ancram gave David Trimble our latest text to read at lunchtime today. He made clear that he was giving him this in confidence and that the text was not for Trimble to retain. Trimble read it quickly, and went into angry mode. He claimed that the text was "significantly" different from the briefing you had given him last Thursday.

He claimed first of all that you had promised him he would see the text before it went to Hume. Michael Ancram said that this did not correspond with his recollection of what you had said, or with our (my) record of the meeting.

On the substance, Trimble said that there did not seem to be the explicit reference he had expected to the need for commitment to exclusively peaceful means and the democratic process. Michael said that there was an explicit reference to paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Ground Rules which set this out, as well as a reference early on in the text to commitment to exclusively peaceful methods.

Trimble also objected to the reference in the first turet of ~~paragraph~~^{page} 3 to exploring "confidence building" measures with Sinn Fein. He said that you had not mentioned this to him. Ancram said that this reference was to the confidence building measures we would be asking for from Sinn Fein, not the

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other way round, in other words things like an end to punishment beatings (see also the middle paragraph on page 6).

Trimble was not satisfied with these explanations and left saying that he would tell you this evening that your briefing last week was not accurate. He clearly then went to tell his colleagues of this exchange. Ken Maginnis subsequently came to see Michael Ancram to check whether what Trimble was saying was accurate. Ancram was able to reassure Maginnis on the points Trimble had raised. He also assured him that we did not envisage making any further changes to the text before it was published, except that we would have to remove references in some places to the "2 Governments" if the Irish Government did not support the statement. ✓

Maginnis also raised concern about the "indicative timetable" (see the main paragraph on page 5). Michael pointed out that the text made perfectly clear that a timetable could only be agreed by the talks participants as a whole. Maginnis seemed reasonably reassured by this too. ✓

I attach the text, with the passages Trimble raised sidelined. I also attach the text of paras 8 and 9 of the Ground Rules paper. ✓

It is not clear how far the UUP will go public at this stage, but their track record does not inspire confidence. One or two journalists appear already to have been told by the UUP that we have sent a further text to Hume. Hume himself is avoiding the media.

Michael Ancram suspects that Trimble's reaction may have been partly for effect. Maginnis's later comments suggested there might have been an element of this. But we shall see. I have briefed Cranborne in case Trimble nobbles

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him. You might like to tell him this evening that premature publicity will not help (we hope to go public later this week), and that denunciation by him will only persuade the other side that the text must be better than they thought! ✓

As I mentioned to you, the reaction from the Irish and Hume so far has not been as negative as we expected/feared. But they have both made the point that a period of waiting will not be acceptable to Sinn Fein. Neither have asked for a change, but I made clear in any case there could be no movement on this point for us: the length of the period for testing the intentions of the IRA and Sinn Fein depended entirely on what the IRA and Sinn Fein said and did. ✓



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