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RECEIVED - 8 JAN 1997

NC/18/1

FROM: PUS
6 JANUARY 1997

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Wood (L&B) - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Ray - B
Mr Hill - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Brooker - B
Mr Beeton - B
Ms Bharucha - B
Ms Mapstone - B
Mr Whysall - B
Mr Carson - B
Mr Lamont, RID, FCO - B
HMA Dublin - B

lmb 8/1
M. S. 8/1

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

JOHN HUME

I spoke to John Hume over the weekend after he had left word that he would like to talk. We did not touch on press reports of his possible standing down as MP for Foyle, though that was much in the news, nor about his party's decision to rule out an electoral pact with Sinn Fein (unless they abandon both violence and abstentionism).

2. John Hume's main point was that he was trying to start a fresh initiative to help bring about an IRA ceasefire, using the medium of Protestant Church Leaders. He did not want to name them on the telephone, but we can I think assume that they are the same group whose work has been signalled to us in strict confidence.

3. John Hume realises that his 10 October Hume/Adams text now has no future following the Prime Minister's statement, but also (and he was showing a high degree of realism) given the impracticability for the Ulster Unionists of making forward movement in present circumstances. He said he had been disappointed by this particularly on the decommissioning issue and in the bilateral discussions between the SDLP and the Ulster Unionists but he had seen David Trimble having to harden up his

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position for reasons that everybody can understand even if they might not like it or sympathise with it. That left HMG, particularly in the pre-election phase, unable to engineer forward movement.

4. Hence, John Hume said, his hope that he could work out a completely fresh text with and through the Protestant Church Group, secure unionists endorsement for it in some fashion and then if all went well, launch it after careful consultation with HMG and the Irish Government (and though he did not say so) no doubt Gerry Adams.

5. I said I hoped that there would be no repeat of the process that had ended in tears before Christmas: in particular, if he was minded to pursue any such initiative he would need to be very sure that the terms of any text would be genuinely acceptable at least to the Ulster Unionists, as a party, as well as, crucially, HMG if it was to avoid making a bad situation substantially worse.

6. John Hume said his great concern was that the period between now and the General Election was one of self-evident fragility in terms of IRA and Loyalist terrorism. Although he was quite explicit, I think he may be putting more money on the mere existence of some new process involving Protestant community in some fashion as well as the Republican movement than on any result - though he was careful not to say that he had signed up Adams to an approach of this character.

7. I asked John Hume whether he had told No 10; he said he had not, so far - I got the signal that he feels rebuffed following his last initiative and anyway that the politics of the situation had locked things up pretty tight. Nonetheless, he clearly wants to keep us in play, and I said that the Secretary of State and Michael Ancram would no doubt want to hear about any ideas as soon as convenient.

Signed

JOHN CHILCOT

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