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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH CARDINAL DALY,

11 NOVEMBER 1993

The Prime Minister, accompanied by Mr Michael Ancram MP, saw Cardinal Daly for a private discussion of three quarters of an hour on 11 November.

Cardinal Daly raised the question of the Hume/Adams dialogue.

The Prime Minister said that almost anything carrying the Hume/Adams label was likely to be rejected by the Unionists. Despite John Hume's good intentions, there was therefore a risk that his initiative would be counter-productive. A period of silence on the subject of Hume/Adams would be most helpful. The Prime Minister admired John Hume's courage; but the sad fact was that his efforts risked obstructing progress. Likewise, the Prime Minister's close relationship with the Taoiseach, and the work which they hoped to do together, was in danger of being hampered by public speculation about Hume/Adams.

The Prime Minister said that Michael Ancram was carrying his bilateral discussions forward and making substantial progress. But talk of peace being achievable within a week or by Christmas was not helping him.

Cardinal Daly said that there was more polarisation in Northern Ireland than he had known for a long time. John Hume's stature had never been higher. He had the support of the whole Nationalist community. It would be quite wrong to think of Hume as a maverick. Hume was also receiving some encouragement from the Loyalist side.

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Cardinal Daly said that, for all Michael Ancram's efforts, he thought it would be difficult to restart the talks if there was no peace. If the Hume/Adam initiative collapsed, there would be great disillusionment and anger at the missed opportunity. We should discount any thoughts of total victory over the IRA. They still retained much potential for violence. Now that Hume/Adams had raised expectations, he found it hard to see how the Nationalist community could be persuaded simply to go along with the talks process. If the possibilities offered by Hume/Adams were not fully explored by the British Government it would be harder for the Government to be seen within Northern Ireland as neutral. Hume/Adams represented a desire by the IRA to find a way of calling off the violence. We of course would wish them to do so unconditionally, but that was not how they worked.

Cardinal Daly said that Sinn Fein and PIRA were not meshed so inextricably that we could not distinguish one from the other. Under Hume's influence, Adams had moved a long way from the traditional Republican ideology. He might be able to move further. There was a general perception that if John Hume had concluded that the position he had reached with Adams should be acceptable to the SDLP and to the Irish Government, it must be worthy of serious consideration. Traditional language, for example, about self-determination and the indivisibility of Ireland, had been set aside or diluted. Cardinal Daly said that he was alarmed at the prospect that this opportunity might be missed.

The Prime Minister replied that it was not clear what the opportunity was. The Irish Government had rejected the outcome of Hume/Adams. Proposals from that quarter would not run with the Unionists.

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Cardinal Daly suggested that the outcome of Hume/Adams might be put in different words, but leaving enough content for Adams to accept.

The Prime Minister said that it was essential to divorce proposals from the Hume/Adams sources. If a peace plan had come from Ian Paisley, it would not have been acceptable to the Nationalists, irrespective of its merits. He had not given up hope that some of the elements discussed by Hume might be rescued - but the divorce was essential.

Cardinal Daly said that John Hume had no equal as a constitutional statesman over the past 20 years. The outcome had been more Hume than Adams. If we rejected it, we were rejecting Hume. There was an enormous danger in appearing to reject John Hume's life's work. This could drive the Nationalists to despair. Hume had lived for years with the charge that he was too favourable to the British because he was against the IRA.

Cardinal Daly said that peace was achievable, but not by rejecting the Nationalist community. The challenge, therefore, was to find a way of reformulating the proposal.

The Prime Minister repeated that the perception that proposals were coming from Hume/Adams made this very difficult. Michael Ancram observed that the initial favourable Unionist reaction to Dick Spring's "six principles" speech had been reversed rapidly once it appeared that Spring's ideas were in part derived from Hume/Adams. The Prime Minister said that the Unionists would reject the Sermon on the Mount if it came from Hume/Adams.

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Cardinal Daly repeated that the Nationalist community had not been so united about anything over two decades. There could not be a total victory for one side or the other. Peace was definitely achievable. He had good reason to think that Loyalist violence would decline if the IRA declared a cessation, although it was incorrect to regard Loyalist terrorism as entirely retaliatory.

The Prime Minister thanked Cardinal Daly for the trouble he had taken to come to the meeting. The Prime Minister said that he was committed to doing anything he could to achieve progress in Northern Ireland.

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