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DOWNING STREET DECLARATION: IRISH PRESS COVERAGE

SUMMARY

1. SINN FEIN SEEN TO BE UNDER PRESSURE. HUME REPORTED TO BE LIKELY GO-BETWEEN IN PROVIDING CLARIFICATION OF DECLARATION SOUGHT BY SINN FEIN. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND SELECT COMMITTEE COVERED IN ALL PAPERS. SO FAR NO GOVERNMENT REACTION.

DETAIL

2. THE DOWNING STREET DECLARATION CONTINUES TO DOMINATE THE IRISH MEDIA ALTHOUGH THE FOCUS IS NOW CLEARLY ON SINN FEIN'S POSITION, AND HOW THEY MAY RESPOND TO IT. COMMENTATORS SEE SINN FEIN AS BEING UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE, NOT LEAST BECAUSE OF HUME'S ENDORSEMENT OF THE DECLARATION. AN IRISH PRESS EDITORIAL (17 DECEMBER) STATES 'WITH HUME NOW ENDORSING THE JOINT STATEMENT OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, THE MORAL AND POLITICAL PRESSURE ON THE PROVOS TO SAY YES, HOWEVER HESITATINGLY, WILL BE ENORMOUS. MORAL PRESSURE, OF COURSE, HAS NEVER BOTHERED THE IRA IN THE PAST... BUT IF A LEADER OF HUME'S STANDING AND JUDGEMENT IN THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY FINDS THE DOWNING STREET DECLARATION ACCEPTABLE ... CAN ADAMS AND CO REALLY WALK AWAY AND RETAIN COMMUNITY SUPPORT?

3. ALL THE PAPERS REPORT ADAMS' STATEMENT THAT SINN FEIN'S DELIBERATIONS ON THE DECLARATION 'WILL TAKE SOME TIME AND WILL REQUIRE CLARIFICATION FROM DUBLIN ABOUT ASPECTS OF THE DECLARATION.' THE IRISH PRESS' LEAD STORY STATES THAT HUME WILL ACT AS A GO BETWEEN IN TALKS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND SINN FEIN TO PROVIDE THE CLARIFICATION NEEDED. SENIOR GOVERNMENT SOURCES ARE QUOTED AS SAYING THAT JOHN HUME WOULD BE 'VERY USEFUL' IN THE WEEKS AHEAD.

4. THE DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH THE FORMATION OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS SELECT COMMITTEE ON NORTHERN IRELAND IS REPORTED IN

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ALL THE PAPERS. THERE HAS BEEN NO GOVERNMENT REACTION SO FAR, ALTHOUGH UNNAMED SOURCES ARE REPORTED AS SAYING THAT LONDON'S 'MALADROIT TIMING' WOULD MAKE IT HARDER TO PERSUADE THE IRA TO MAKE A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE DECLARATION.

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