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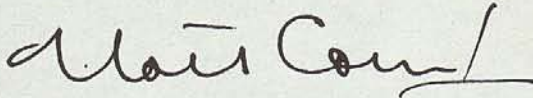
NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B)
PS/Ministers (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Stephens
Mr Brennan
Mr Chesterton
Mr Innes
Mr Elliott
Mr Spence
Mr Gilliland
Mr Bell
Miss Elliott
Mr Blackwell
Mr S Hewitt
Mr G Hewitt
Mr Ehrman

I was contacted today by an American journalist who spoke on Thursday to Peter Robinson. According to my contact Robinson was expressing a fairly realistic message which accepted that the Agreement was in place and could not be 'smashed'. It could only be replaced and Robinson said that Unionists would have to go into any negotiations with a real intention of coming up with an acceptable formula which could replace the Agreement. According to the source, Robinson realised that to do otherwise would only cause the Agreement to come back into force and if the talks had broken down because of apparent Unionist intransigence the fault would be seen to be theirs. In this sense Robinson appeared to realise that talks would begin with the Unionists with 'a gun to their heads' but that they were prepared to begin on this basis.

Comment

2. The journalist concerned admitted that in respect of Northern Ireland politics, he was 'new to this game' and realised that Robinson could be supplying him with a soft line for publication in America. Nevertheless he felt that Robinson genuinely meant what he said and my source detected a surprising degree of pragmatism and resignation to events.

for 
J ALFORD
Political Affairs Division

11 April 1986

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