



Forward to St.  
18/5/00

Northern Ireland Office  
Castle Buildings  
Belfast BT4 3SG

Professor Monica McWilliams MLA  
NI Women's Coalition  
50 University Street  
BELFAST  
BT7 1HB

15 May 2000

Dear Monica,

I have today written to David Trimble addressing some of the issues which arose during the discussions at Hillsborough on 4-5 May. I thought it would be helpful if you and the other leaders of the parties who participated in those discussions had sight of the letter, and I enclose a copy.

PETER MANDELSON



Northern Ireland Office  
Castle Buildings  
Belfast BT4 3SG

The Rt Hon David Trimble MP MLA  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
BELFAST  
BT4 3XX

15 May 2000

*Dear David,*

You raised a number of points with the Prime Minister and me in the course of our recent discussions. I have discussed them again with the Prime Minister and this letter sets out our views.

Punishment beatings and shootings are incompatible with pursuing political objectives peacefully. As is clear both from the legislation and our statements, their continuation will be taken into account in assessing the ceasefires.

The putting of arms completely and verifiably beyond use will need to be in accordance with a decommissioning scheme worked out with the IICD. This again is clear from the two Governments' statements on 5 May. We expect the IICD to make regular reports, whose content must be for the IICD to determine. They will be published promptly by the two Governments.

The final releases of prisoners on 28 July 2000 can only proceed if the ceasefires are maintained. Our judgement on that will take into account, among other matters, any act of violence by paramilitaries and whether there is full co-operation with the IICD in the manner agreed.

The Northern Ireland Act 2000 will not be repealed. As we have said, if difficulties arise in the implementation of the Agreement, there will be an immediate formal review. As the Agreement states, the Assembly and the North/South Ministerial Council are mutually interdependent and one cannot function successfully without the other. If the Assembly collapses, the North/South Ministerial Council will not



meet and we envisage that the functions of the implementation bodies will, within a reasonable period, return to where they came from. In the event of direct rule, we will remain faithful to the spirit and letter of the Agreement.

Northern Ireland is legitimately part of the UK. In accordance with the commitments in the Agreement, we will look to recognise that in visible ways that are, of course, sensitive to the views of both traditions.

I will be inviting the new Policing Board to agree the design of the service badge. Obviously, I shall need to take a power in the Police Bill to decide the issue in case they are unable to agree.

Our intention is that policing and criminal justice functions should be devolved sooner rather than later, and as soon as possible after the enactment of legislation on the Criminal Justice Review. In relation to criminal justice functions, we would be ready to include a date in the implementation plan for the review.

We will bring forward early legislation on electoral fraud. I would hope to find Parliamentary time for this before the General Election, although the timing of this will obviously depend on the timing of the Election.

I know your concerns about flag flying from public buildings. I look to the Executive to address the issue. But if the Executive cannot reach consensus, I do not want this to become a running sore. Consequently, I will take the power by Order in Council to provide a proper legal basis for the regulation of the flying of flags, including on official flag days. I will, of course, consult fully with all parties before exercising it.

You have made a strong case over the issue of the police name and the need to demonstrate clearly, as indeed the Patten Report states, that the RUC is not being



disbanded. The Government is well aware of the deep concern over this issue. I can confirm that the Royal Ulster Constabulary is not being disbanded. I believe that we can find ways of retaining an honourable and permanent place for the RUC name, consistent with implementing the reform proposals of the Patten Report, and we will do so in a manner which shows sensitivity to the views of the entire community and does not present any obstacle to the aim we all share: a police service capable of attracting and sustaining support from the community as a whole.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Mandelson", written in a cursive style.

PETER MANDELSON