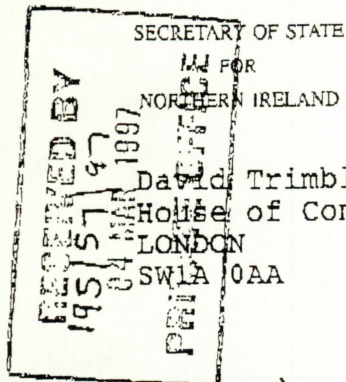




NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZ



David Trimble Esq MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

6 March 1997

Handwritten: Handwritten:

Thank you for your letter of 24 February, which I understand you copied to the Irish Government delegation.

You mention a number of developments related to the issue of decommissioning which your party would like to see. In particular, you suggest that it is now time for the nomination of the Independent Commission.

I have discussed your proposals with the Irish Government. As you are aware, both Her Majesty's Government and the Irish Government are fully committed to the implementation of all aspects of the report of the International Body, including the establishment of an Independent Commission as recommended by the Body. Both Governments are determined that no action or omission on their part will hold up the decommissioning of illegally held weapons. We have demonstrated our good faith in this regard by bringing legislation through our respective Parliaments to provide the legal basis for the implementation of the International Body's recommendations.

However, most of the matters you raise, apart from the legislation, depend on there being a degree of prior agreement among the talks participants before any significant progress could be made. For example, as you will recall, the agreed agenda for the remainder of the opening plenary envisages that any agreed mechanisms on decommissioning should be established at the same time as the launch of the three strands of substantive negotiations.



I very much regret that, as you say in your letter, there is at present little sign of agreement arising from the series of meetings your party has been having with the Chairmen and other participants. In the absence of such agreement, especially on the terms of reference which parties would wish to see for any Independent Commission, or on a date for the launch of the three strands, it would be premature to proceed to nominate potential members of such a Commission. We do of course very much share your desire to register some forward movement in the talks and look forward to the point at which circumstances will make it feasible to pursue your various suggestions.

James Gairns,
Sat 23