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10 DOWNING STREET  
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SUBJECT  
MASTER

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Ireland:  
Situation:  
Pat 1

12 May 1997

From the Private Secretary

Dear Gen.

### CALL BY THE DUP, 12 MAY

Dr. Paisley called on the Prime Minister for 30 minutes this morning. He was unaccompanied. Dr. Mowlam, Jonathan Stephens, Jonathan Powell and I were there on our side.

Dr. Paisley started by saying that he was off to Brussels this evening for a meeting with Santer to secure further finance from the EU, both from the Peace and Reconciliation Fund and under Objective 1 of the Structural Funds. He was a fan of the Reconciliation Fund, although the Protestant population had not been as quick off the mark as the Nationalists in getting their fair share. He added that previous Governments had never given sufficient respect to the three Northern Ireland MEPs, who should be consulted on European matters.

The Prime Minister asked for Dr. Paisley's assessment of the situation in Northern Ireland. Dr. Paisley was very worried about the paramilitaries. His concern was less about the Loyalists, where he did not expect a major upsurge in violence although the odd killing might continue, than about the Republicans. He had just heard from his security men about an apparent PIRA plan to kill a prominent Loyalist in East Belfast. That would really set the cat among the pigeons, and could by no means be ruled out.

Responding to the Prime Minister's mention of Sinn Fein's election performance, Dr. Paisley said that there was a lot of anger in Mid-Ulster about the way in which Hume had effectively given McGuinness his support. On the local elections, he hoped the DUP would gain a few seats, but PR made the results very difficult to call. It was unclear whether the Sinn Fein vote would stay up, or whether there might be a swing back to the SDLP.

Paisley went on that the DUP was prepared to sit with Sinn Fein in locally-elected councils. He would also sit in the House of Commons with them if they took their seats. But he was not prepared to negotiate Northern Ireland's future

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with them. In any case, the Forum already provided a democratically elected place where discussions could be held. Sinn Fein should be encouraged to take up their seats, and the SDLP to return there.

The Prime Minister asked how the process could be moved forward. Dr. Paisley said the key was to grasp the nettle of decommissioning. The previous Government and the Irish Government had said it would be dealt with first in the talks, but it was being avoided. A vote should be taken on it in the talks, as the DUP had already suggested. There was no point in waiting for consensus on the issue. It would never come. It was quite unacceptable for the prospects for decommissioning to depend on the two Army Councils, who had a common interest in "mutuality". If an attempt was made to move on to the three strands in the talks without decommissioning, the Unionists would not be there, even Trimble. Decommissioning was the main confidence-building measure as far as the Unionists were concerned.

Dr. Mowlam commented that one problem with decommissioning was that, even when weapons had been given up, more could easily be acquired. Dr. Paisley said that this was not so clear these days, with a different US attitude.

This was followed by an argument about whether the proportion of votes won in the form of elections was taken into account in the voting system for the talks. Dr. Paisley argued that it was not. Jonathan Stephens pointed out that it was taken into account in the rules of consensus.

The Prime Minister said that his priority was to make clear to the Unionists that he was absolutely attached to the principle of consent. His Government would not be acting as "persuaders" for Irish unity. He asked Dr. Paisley the best way of reassuring the Unionists.

Dr. Paisley repeated that the Forum should be exploited better. The SDLP should be persuaded to go back, and Sinn Fein told that this was the place to talk to the other democratic parties. Unfortunately, the impression had been given that the Labour Party did not like the Forum. But the reality was that the Forum was the place where parties were represented according to their voting strength. It could be the salvation of the peace process.

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The Prime Minister pointed out that there were obvious difficulties with the forum as a basis for the future, given the attitude of the Nationalists. What else could Dr. Paisley suggest?

Dr. Paisley said that the Framework Document was regarded by all the Unionists as a major step on the inevitable road to a united Ireland. This was totally unacceptable. The Government should make clear that they would not force the Framework Document down people's throats.

The Prime Minister asked whether this meant no cross-border co-operation. Dr. Paisley argued that the obstacles to this lay on the Irish side, particularly the Irish Constitution of 1937 and Articles 2 and 3. Good-neighbourly relations were impossible while they were there. The Government should press for the removal of Articles 2 and 3. It would help to overcome Unionist suspicions of Labour, which he did not share himself but were nevertheless real enough.

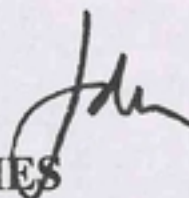
... Dr. Paisley concluded by handing over the attached paper about the closure of residential homes in David Trimble's constituency. He said that there were only two such homes left in Portadown, Hoophill and Edenderry. There was all-party cooperation on this and he had promised to give the Prime Minister the document.

#### Comment

This was a friendly enough meeting, but Dr. Paisley had little new or constructive to offer. I assume the constituency point raised at the end is part of some game with Trimble.

I am copying this letter to William Ehrman (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office) and Veronica Sutherland in Dublin.

*Yours ever*



JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

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