

CONFIDENTIAL**10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA**

f/lemen kk

b JP
AC
PB o/r

From the Principal Private Secretary

3 September 1997

*Dee Richard,***NORTHERN IRELAND**

I should record a couple of contacts with Sandy Berger, to follow up the Prime Minister's conversation with the President earlier in the week. I spoke to Berger on 2 September to urge him to use his influence with the Irish over the language we had put to them on consent and decommissioning. I also sent him a copy of the language which we had given the Irish. He said he also proposed to speak to Trimble, to encourage him to stay in the talks, and would be meeting Adams the following day.

I welcomed the idea of a conversation with Trimble, and endorsed his thought that it would be useful to make sure Trimble knew he would be welcome in Washington whenever he wanted to come. I explained some of Trimble's current concerns. On Adams, I urged Berger to get across the simple message that a tactical cessation of violence was unacceptable. Sinn Fein needed to opt for politics for good. Berger said he needed no urging from us to get across this message.

Berger rang me back this afternoon to say that he had now spoken to Trimble, and found him in somewhat sour mood. He was particularly concerned about the comments on consent made by Dr Mowlam to the Belfast Telegraph. He had also appeared somewhat downcast that the Prime Minister had told him there could be no guarantees on decommissioning. He had however made clear that the consent language was in practice the more important. Berger had put across his idea about inviting him to Washington, and also urged Trimble to seize the opportunity of the talks, in case it might not recur. Trimble had listened to all this but not made any significant response.

CONFIDENTIAL

HJ

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

Berger said that he had also spoken to Paddy Teahon, as we had asked. On the basis of what Teahon had said, it appeared that the Taoiseach would be writing to the Prime Minister to say that the Irish had no difficulty with what we were proposing on consent, but did have problems with our suggested language on decommissioning. They feared that, even though there was no obligation to decommission suggested, some of the parties would nevertheless seize on it as a benchmark, and use it as a trapdoor for Sinn Fein if there was in effect no progress on decommissioning during the negotiations. I said that I understood the point, but the fact was that the Unionists would react in this way to lack of progress on decommissioning whatever we said now. The important immediate point was to get the Unionists to stay in, to allow a more productive process to get underway. Berger said that he had urged Teahon to do all he could to take our points, but he feared that the Irish would be very hard to move on decommissioning.

I have not yet seen a reply from the Taoiseach, but will let you have it as soon as it appears. My own contacts with Teahon suggest a similar picture to that conveyed by Berger, as of course do Veronica Sutherland's with Mansergh (the language attached to her letter of today was in fact what the Irish sent us before they got our latest proposal).

I am copying this to John Grant (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), and to Sir John Kerr in Washington and Veronica Sutherland in Dublin by fax.

Yours ever
John

JOHN HOLMES

Richard Lemon Esq
Minister of State's Office
Northern Ireland Office

CONFIDENTIAL