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**FAXED** - To PM's Party in  
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**From:** Philip Barton  
**Date:** 7 August 1997

**PRIME MINISTER**

**cc:** Jonathan Powell o/r  
John Holmes o/r  
Alastair Campbell o/r

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

You might like a short update on where things stand.

Mo Mowlam's meeting with Sinn Fein on Wednesday went as well as could be expected. The atmosphere was good. Mo looked forward to Sinn Fein joining the talks in September provided the IRA ceasefire was maintained "in word and deed". She also emphasised our continuing commitment to the joint document on decommissioning.

In response, Gerry Adams and his colleagues set out their desire for a united Ireland and commitment to inclusive talks, but spent most of the meeting making a series of complaints, in particular about the Garvaghy Road, prisoners and the security forces. Mo basically took note, although she promised to look into a couple of points on prisoners and the Apprentice Boys' march this weekend. Sinn Fein also handed over a paper setting out their position in standard terms - attached together with the NIO's (lengthy) record of the meeting in case you want to look at a little more of the detail.

Press coverage of the meeting has been fair - Sinn Fein played it straight and did not try to pull any stunts. The coverage has, however, highlighted our differences by focusing on Sinn Fein's demands for a united Ireland and Mo's call for decommissioning. We have squashed suggestions from the press that you plan to invite Gerry Adams to No.10 at an early stage.

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Reaction from the Ulster Unionists has been muted, no doubt in part because Trimble is on holiday. Empey has simply said that two weeks is insufficient to test the ceasefire.

Paisley has inevitably been more strident. He saw Mo this morning. He described the present talks process as a complete failure and made clear the DUP would not sit down with Sinn Fein. He also put forward (completely unrealistic) proposals for new talks, which are set out in the attached paper (no need to read). Nevertheless, the NIO take some comfort from the fact that Paisley said he would continue to talk to them bilaterally.

Mo is rightly taking none of this too tragically and remains determined to press ahead on 15 September. The next event will be a meeting with the Irish at official level on Friday. This will be an opportunity to press them on early establishment of the Independent Commission, as well as to discuss how to take negotiations forward.

Otherwise, there is growing optimism that the Apprentice Boys' march in Londonderry on Saturday will pass off peacefully. The RUC have re-routed three of the more contentious feeder marches, while the Bogside residents decided last night that they would not oppose the main march. There is then one more major march towards the end of August, but the NIO expect this to pass quietly too.

*Philip***PHILIP BARTON****CONFIDENTIAL**