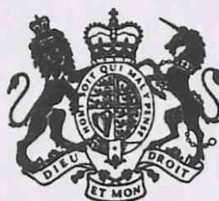


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SUBJECT  
MASTER10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

Filed on:

From the Private Secretary

28 July 1997

*Dear Sir,*

### NORTHERN IRELAND: TELEPHONE CALL WITH PRESIDENT CLINTON

The Prime Minister spoke to the President on the telephone on 27 July. I have recorded separately discussion of the Middle East and the Prime Minister's visit to Washington.

Clinton began by congratulating the Prime Minister on the new ceasefire. At least there was now a chance of a settlement.

The Prime Minister explained that we were trying to keep the Ulster Unionists in the process. He was reasonably confident of being able to do so, despite pressure on them from the right wing press. Decommissioning of illegal weapons was an important issue for them, and Sinn Fein insistence that the IRA would not give up their weapons hardly helped. Nevertheless he hoped to be able to get the Irish Government at least to say that they wanted to see actual decommissioning during the negotiations.

Clinton asked whether the Americans could help with Trimble. The Prime Minister said that if Trimble felt his role in staying in the negotiations was important, this helped. He was sensitive to international opinion up to a point. It would also be useful if the Irish Government could be persuaded of the need to help Trimble. It was the usual balancing act. But he would let the President have some more specific ideas on how the US could help. Clinton confirmed that he was very ready to do so in whatever way seemed best.

The Prime Minister added that if the negotiations got going seriously, another US initiative such as a new Presidential visit would be worth considering. He wanted to give the people of Northern Ireland the feeling that something

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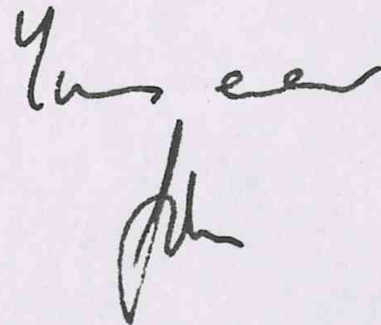
special was happening and that the eyes of the world were on them. Clinton said that this was a well he could only go to one more time, so the timing would have to be thought about carefully, but he was interested in principle.

The Prime Minister said he would not ask the President to come if there was not real progress in prospect. But he remained convinced that the ordinary people were desperate for peace. There was for example evidence of Unionist businessmen putting pressure on the UUP to stay in the process. He hoped that the rest of the summer could be got through calmly, despite some more sensitive marches coming up. He would then much appreciate help with Trimble and the Irish Government.

Comment

The Prime Minister proposes to write to the President to follow up this conversation, to encourage him to help with Trimble and to keep up the pressure on Sinn Fein. I will revert with a draft shortly.

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



JOHN HOLMES

John McKervill Esq  
Northern Ireland Office

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