

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
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Rec'd by fax?

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29 July 1997

Dear John,

**NORTHERN IRELAND: PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR TRIMBLE
ON 30 JULY**

Dr Mowlam's minute of 25 July to the Prime Minister set out her proposed strategy for the summer and provides a useful context for the Prime Minister's planned meeting with Mr Trimble tomorrow.

He may find it helpful, however, to have the attached speaking note on points which may arise during the meeting. I also enclose an article from Belfast Newsletter of 25 July, based on an interview with Mr Trimble, which gives a good indication of how he is positioning himself.

One of Mr Trimble's major concerns will be the timing of the establishment of the Independent Commission (on decommissioning). Now it is virtually certain that Sinn Féin will be engaged in the negotiations on 15 September, Mr Trimble will be doubly concerned that the Independent Commission should be fully established in time to make decommissioning at least a theoretical possibility from when the substantive negotiations begin on 15 September. I enclose the communiqué issued after today's meeting between Dr Mowlam and Mr Burke which enables us confidently to provide such an assurance.

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- A full report of the meeting will follow but, in a nutshell, the Irish side responded very positively to our pressure to make early progress on the Independent Commission; and they remain keen to promote an agreement on decommissioning and preserve the present talks process, with the UUP fully engaged, if at all possible. We agreed on the need to identify on a contingency basis how the substantive negotiations could be taken forward on 15 September in the absence of agreement on decommissioning, but the Irish side showed a proper appreciation of the need to engage the parties (especially the UUP) in those circumstances.

Two other points worth noting:

- Mr Trimble and other UUP spokesmen have been suggesting publicly (like the DUP) that the talks might continue from September in "bilaterals, trilaterals and so on", rather than on a round table basis. My Secretary of State continues to believe that we should, for the moment, continue to aim for the latter; but it is reassuring that so soon after the IRA ceasefire the two largest Unionist parties are looking for ways to stay in a talks process alongside Sinn Féin, even if not initially face to face
- Mr Trimble is giving renewed emphasis to the traditional UUP tactic of suggesting a difference of policy between the NIO and No 10. If allowed to run on unchecked this could cause problems down the track.

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I will let you have a further note commenting on the "confidence building measures for Unionists" suggested by John D Taylor in his manuscript letter to the Prime Minister of 23 July.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Jan Polley in the Cabinet Office.

Yours ever

Ken

W K LINDSAY

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