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From: John Holmes
Date: 7 October 1997

PRIME MINISTER

cc: Jonathan Powell

MEETING WITH TRIMBLE, 1500

I attach:

- NIO brief for the meeting;
- Mo's paper of 25 September about what a political settlement might look like, including the likely points of difficulty (you have already seen);
- the Joint Framework Document itself;
- Trimble's 1992 paper on a "Council of the British Isles", which he gave you in July.

This should give you the necessary background for the meeting, for which you promised Trimble a couple of hours.

The main issues in his mind will be the North-South body (on which you should look at the Framework's language carefully) and a new Anglo-Irish Agreement. The underlying problem is that he wants you to disown the Framework Documents. The Irish and SDLP want to hold you to them.

Jonathan and I will arrive well beforehand (around 1400), so we can talk through the issues as necessary. I will also bring with me the recent book on Northern Ireland's future Trimble was keen for you to read.

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Mo fought the good fight for some time on her attendance, or at least that of Paul Murphy, but gave in with a good grace in the end. But she is very anxious that you should not do any kind of side-deal with Trimble. The other parties are all aware you are meeting him, because his people leaked it, and are very suspicious. I have offered Hume a meeting with you in a couple of weeks' time to smooth him over a bit.

Trimble himself will have flown back from Washington overnight, as will Donaldson, who will be with him. He saw Clinton in a "drop-by" meeting for twenty minutes earlier today. According to the Americans, this went very well, and Trimble was in very constructive mode, while making clear the North-South issues would be very difficult. Trimble also apparently swallowed the US line that not designating the IRA as a terrorist organisation now, but keeping the threat hanging over them, was the right tactic in present circumstances.

Meanwhile the talks proper started in Belfast today, with separate meetings on each of the three strands. It was apparently all business-like, and there is a real air of something beginning to happen. McGuinness made an inflammatory speech over the weekend, saying Sinn Fein's only aim remained to "smash the Union", but Adams' remarks inside the talks today were much more conciliatory. McGuinness's remarks were no doubt aimed at placating the hardliners before the IRA General Army Council meeting expected later this week.

I have agreed to a short bilateral between you and Ahern in the margins of the Council of Europe Summit in Strasbourg. You have not talked to him for a while, the Irish are also anxious about your meeting with Trimble, and he gave up his speaking slot to you so you could leave early. Incidentally, Burke's

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resignation not only as Foreign Minister but also as an MP leaves him with a significant political problem as a minority government already. A by-election which he may lose is the last thing he needs.

**John Holmes****CONFIDENTIAL**