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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

14 October 1997

SUBJECT
MASTER

Filed on:

Dee Ken,

MEETING WITH TRIMBLE, 13 OCTOBER

The Prime Minister met Trimble privately over a sandwich lunch in Craigavon Borough Council. Dr. Mowlam, Jonathan Powell, Alastair Campbell and I were there, but the layout of the room meant that some of the conversation went unheard by the rest of us. Trimble was in cheerful form, and did not waste time complaining about what was going to happen with Sinn Fein later in the afternoon.

Insofar as I could hear what happened, Trimble said that confidence-building measures for the Unionists were still too slow, and were not receiving sufficient salience in the media. On his return to the Province at the end of the previous week, he had found people edgy and depressed, and feeling that all the concessions were one way. The Jason Campbell shambles had not helped. People did not want to see the Government interfering in legal processes for political reasons.

The Prime Minister asked about handling Adams. Trimble said that his advice was to put a large desk in the middle of the room where they would be meeting, and keep his hands to himself. The Prime Minister said that he could not do this. He had to treat them on a personal basis like anyone else. But he would ensure that there was no publicity. He asked what kind of reception he would get in East Belfast. Trimble said that the odd person might shout, but he did not expect serious difficulty.

Trimble raised again the need to recognise the position of the victims of violence. The Prime Minister repeated that we were looking to do something about this, as he had already said publicly earlier in the day. Trimble said there was a need to mention the RUC specifically in talk of victims, since otherwise they felt left out. Meanwhile, the Government should not give so many carrots

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to the Republicans. His information from the IRA meeting over the weekend was that they would stick with their present position until at least the New Year.

The Prime Minister said that there was clearly an intense internal battle going on. He would have a better feel for this when he had looked Gerry Adams in the eyes, but he believed that he did want to take a peaceful road, although it was not clear how far he was prepared to go within the movement to ensure this. Trimble commented that the institutional changes Adams needed to sell a settlement to his own people could be too much for the Unionists.

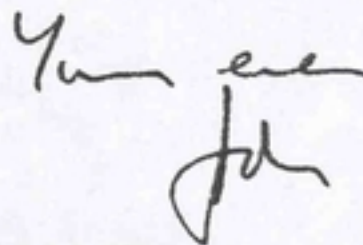
The Prime Minister said that he had talked to the Taoiseach in Strasbourg about possible changes to Strand 3. There were likely to be difficulties with them about this, but he had flagged up the problem and would go on working on it. His instinct was that the Irish saw Northern Ireland as a political problem to be managed, rather than as one of their real priorities, unlike for example the single currency.

Trimble raised Bloody Sunday. If the Government needed to apologise, it should do so. But we should not go beyond what Widgery had said about some soldiers behaving in a feckless way. Otherwise the situation could become too difficult to handle. This meant that any kind of inquiry would be very difficult.

The Prime Minister commented that old hatreds had to be overcome. He asked about the position of the DUP. Trimble said that it was important to go on trying to attract them in.

I am recording separately what the UUP leadership said to the Prime Minister during his tour of the parties in Castle Buildings later that afternoon.

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



JOHN HOLMES

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