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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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(initials)  
JES



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Private Secretary to the  
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17 November 1997

*Dear John,*

**MEETING WITH DAVID TRIMBLE MP, 18 NOVEMBER**

Further to my letter of 14 November 1997, the Prime Minister may find it helpful to have a report on the Liaison Group meeting of British and Irish officials on Friday. This resulted in some helpful signs from the Irish on East-West structures which may prove useful in preparing Mr Trimble for his meeting with the Taoiseach on Thursday. I attach some key points which the Prime Minister may use as an aide for his meeting with Mr Trimble.

The Irish chose not to respond formally to our paper on the "Totality of Relationships" (Annex B to my letter of 14 November) but privately indicated that if the UUP were to accept a North South body with significant role and powers then the paper set out the sort of East/West context which the Irish might be brought to accept. This is encouraging, suggesting there is the potential for delivering a deal on an East-West, North-South package which both the Irish and the UUP could live with. This would be alongside the other key elements forming the bones of a settlement: structures within Northern Ireland; agreed provisions to address the equality, rights and justice issues; and, a balanced constitutional accommodation.

This initial informal response from the Irish Government is encouraging so far as it goes, and if Mr Trimble is serious about reaching an accommodation with them, one that he should seek to develop in his meeting with the Taoiseach. To help the Prime Minister

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"prepare" Mr Trimble for this meeting it might be useful if the Prime Minister were to deploy the paper during his discussion with Mr Trimble. The benefits of this for the talks process would be:

- (a) to indicate to Mr Trimble the possibilities of a deal on East-West, North-South relationships acceptable to both the Irish Government and the UUP; and,
- (b) to encourage Mr Trimble to use his meeting with the Taoiseach to develop a constructive relationship with the Irish Government which could be built upon in the intensive round of bilaterals at Castle Buildings.

Mr Murphy told Mr Trimble this afternoon that he expected the Prime Minister would want to discuss East/West issues tomorrow; and Mr Trimble welcomed that. Tactically, the Prime Minister might outline the key elements of the paper describing it as a working paper to test his own understanding of what both the UUP and the Irish Government might find acceptable. If Mr Trimble reacts positively, then the Prime Minister might consider handing a copy to him (although he should be asked to not reveal to the Irish Government that he has been given such a paper)

A decision on whether to give a copy of the paper to Mr Trimble would need to be judged on his reaction particularly to the need for strong North-South structures. In this context it is worth noting that our paper deliberately steers a middle path. The UUP insist that North-South arrangements should be within the umbrella of East-West structures. The SDLP insisted in their meeting with the Prime Minister on 12 November, that placing the North-South body and its executive powers into or under an East-West body would present a serious difficulty, since it would seem to subsume and demote the North-South body. Our paper envisages the East/West and North/South structures existing "alongside" each other - so allowing the UUP to say North/South structures were in the context of East/West arrangements, without making them subservient to the latter.



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I am sending copies of this letter to John Grant (FCO), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Chris Meyer (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R P Lemon'.

**R P Lemon**  
**Private Secretary to Paul Murphy MP**  
**Minister of State**

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