

CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AASUBJECT  
MASTERFiled on:  
Ireland  
Situation  
28.1.98

From the Principal Private Secretary

27 January 1998

Dear Gen,

## CONVERSATION WITH DAVID TRIMBLE, 27 JANUARY

The Prime Minister spoke to David Trimble for a few minutes this morning. The Prime Minister said that he understood there were significant problems about the Strand 2 document under discussion. Trimble said that the NIO had refused to show him the paper. He obviously had problems when he found out more of what was going through the Dublin newspapers than through the NIO, despite repeated requests to see the paper.

The Prime Minister said that there was a major problem for the Irish side, who were being accused of abandoning the Joint Framework Document, as were we. He was ready to make clear that we had not. But the point was that the propositions paper was on the table and things needed to be moved forward. The Irish wanted to say in the paper that the two Governments were firmly committed to the framework document, but the paper would go on to say at a later point that it was for the parties to agree.

Trimble said that the Irish wanted a paper they could describe as a repudiation of the propositions paper. He could not agree anything without seeing the paper. He would not put up with this treatment, which was reminiscent of the bad old days. Paul Murphy had shown him a paragraph, without showing him the rest of the paper. He was quite clear that the quote from the framework document was unacceptable.

The Prime Minister said that we could not appear to repudiate the framework document ourselves. As far as the preamble to this paper was concerned, he could not say to the Irish that we were not committed to the framework document. He would make sure that Trimble could see the paper. The disputed passage was really only an introduction to the questions, and the propositions paper was fully quoted from.

CONFIDENTIAL



CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

Trimble said that he had also seen that there was a reference to 12 paragraphs of the framework document. This implied a commitment to a specific model for the North-South institutions. He had no problem with this being one of the options, as long as the other options were there too, including the model the UUP would prefer. A specific reference to the framework document in this way was the worst possible for the UUP.

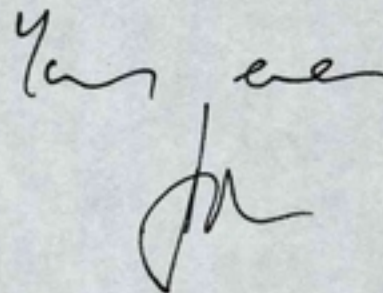
The Prime Minister asked whether it would be better if the reference to the framework document came before the references to the propositions paper. He thought it might be. Trimble said he could not comment, since he had not seen the paper.

The Prime Minister said that it was clear that we could not agree to table the paper now. But he would ensure that the paper was shown to Trimble, to see whether we could work something out. The conversation was left there.

#### Comment

The impression given by Trimble was that he might be able to live with a firm commitment to the Framework Document from us, if the more specific references were removed. But he seemed more immediately concerned with process than substance. The document has of course since been tabled in revised form, to Trimble's evident anger.

I am copying this to John Grant (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir Sir Christopher Meyer in Washington and Veronica Sutherland in Dublin.



JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

CONFIDENTIAL