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7 OCTOBER 1997

TO HQ **FROM WASHINGTON**

FOR SECRETARY GALLAGHER **FROM P HENNESSY**

DAVID TRIMBLE IN WASHINGTON

1. The UUP leader undertook a full programme of appointments in Washington over the last two days. The initial reaction on all sides is that he has improved greatly in presentational terms since his previous visits. He was universally found to be more relaxed and less abrasive, and benefitted accordingly. On substance, he stressed his own positions rather than attacking others; there was clever packaging of his views on North\South and East\West relations (the lack of content might not be clear to all his interlocuters); and he played up the need for Paisley to be brought within the fold. Trimble will also have been flattered (as was the intention) by his high level reception at the White House.

White House

2. I spoke to Larry Butler, National Security Council, on the meeting with the National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, which included a "drop-by" by the President and Vice-President (a reflection of the White House' determination to do what it can to encourage Trimble to play a positive role). According to Butler, Trimble was clearly gratified by the turn-out, and played his part in what was described as a good humored meeting. Points to emerge included the following:

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-- Trimble was told in confidence that the IRA would not be included in a list of terrorist organizations which will be published tomorrow (this list was mandated by anti-terrorism legislation passed last year by Congress). To the relief of his hosts, Trimble reacted well, choosing to see the Administration's reliance on the genuine character of the ceasefire in coming to this decision as providing valuable leverage for the future.

-- in this context Berger told his visitors that the US believed that the present ceasefire was genuine, but that, if they were let down, the IRA would not be given a "third bite of the apple" - as Trimble subsequently relayed to the press. Butler affected some surprise that the media would choose to regard this as "new", but conceded that the sentiment had not previously been relayed in such robust language. [He added, importantly, that assessment of compliance was a matter for the Irish and British Governments, and that the Administration would not be responding - "as we were asked to do after Markethill"- to complaints from UUP about individual incidents].

[illegible] (as previously reported, the [illegible]

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for some time).

-- in response to questions on the likely shape of a settlement, Trimble referred to the "totality of relations" concept, which he said had originally been introduced by the Irish Government. Referring to developments in Scotland and Wales, he suggested (as he has done on other occasions) that links between both parts of Ireland, and between Ireland and Britain, should be mediated through a wider framework, thus removing the North/South focus objectionable to Unionists. Trimble also repeated his interest in seeing the negotiations move ahead quickly.

-- Butler said that the President had been encouraged by the meeting, not because of anything particularly new said by Trimble, but because of his less dogmatic approach, of which his decision to lead his party into the talks was the most important example.

Senator Kennedy

3 Senator Kennedy was keen from the outset to use the meeting to encourage Trimble, and struck a generally up-beat tone (including presenting the UUP leader with a framed version of complimentary remarks recently included in the Congressional record). Trimble reiterated familiar points in relation to the need to include Paisley, and the helpful nature of developments in Scotland and Wales. He spoke at some length about the South African analogy, and suggested it bore out his view that ultimately a settlement would have to be brokered by the UUP and the SDLP.

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4 Referring to the political situation in Dublin, Trimble affected to have difficulty in opening lines of communication with the Government, and repeated his comment about the former Minister refusing to speak with him. The UUP leader also claimed that he had no communication with the Taoiseach since Mr Ahern came into office. (I pointed out to Kennedy's staff that this completely mis-represented the situation, and that Trimble has a long record of avoiding efforts on our part to draw him into dialogue).

5 Trimble also mentioned that, subject to final confirmation, he expects to meet Blair in London tomorrow (Wed).

International Relations Committee

6. This has been the scene of some of the more bruising encounters during Trimble's previous visits. But here too a more polished Trimble was on view, and the discussions seem to have taken place in a reasonable atmosphere. The exchanges covered familiar ground, but in response to an enquiry as to how well he knew Adams, he allowed that he had discussed him at great length with a mutual acquaintance, Sean O'Callaghan (a self-confessed MI6 agent)!

ENDS

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