

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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10 MAY 2000

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Parliament Buildings
Belfast BT4 3XX

From the Rt Hon David Trimble, MP, MLA

8 May, 2000

58, 21, 20, 25(

Mr Bertie Ahern, TD
An Taoiseach
Government Buildings
Dublin

Dear Taoiseach,

You will be aware from our meetings on Friday that I have been seeking assurances from Her Majesty's Government on issues pertaining to the Belfast Agreement that are of particular sensitivity to my Party. The Irish Government has the capacity to be helpful and I detail below specific matters that I would be grateful for your co-operation in handling sensitively:

1. We wish to retain the name of the RUC in the Police Bill, which is currently awaiting publication. I believe the form agreed with HMG meets our requirements and will prove broadly acceptable to the nationalist community. We intend to leave the badge and other emblems to the new police Board but it is our view that the present badge is an ideal reflection of both traditions in Northern Ireland.

2. We are seeking legislation to put the official flag days for public buildings on to a statutory basis. This will avoid the controversy on this issue that dogged the Executive and proved particularly damaging to our position.

3. The Governments must clearly indicate that commitment to peaceful means is incompatible with beatings and shootings and that any continuation of these activities will be taken into account in the assessment of cease-fires.

4. There must be regular IICD reports whose contents and publication must remain within the control of the IICD itself.

5. The final release of prisoners in July must be judged scrupulously in relation to the statutory considerations, notably the state of cease-fires and progress on decommissioning.

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6. In the event of the collapse of the Assembly due to the default of a Party both Governments must remain faithful to the spirit and letter of the Agreement. This must include the winding up of North-South Institutions within a reasonable time.

7. In accordance with the Agreement, the legitimacy of Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom must be respected. More than lipservice must be paid to the principle of consent - this is the bedrock of unionist support for the Agreement.

The careful response of your government to these issues (and crucially, your public reaction) will have an important bearing on our capacity to make a positive recommendation to the Ulster Unionist Council. I would be grateful if we can remain in close contact as events unfold this week.

Yours sincerely,

pp **DAVID TRIMBLE**
(Approved by Mr Trimble and signed in his absence)

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