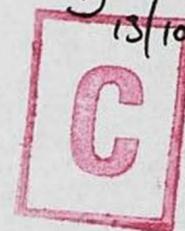


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Mr Johnston

FROM: DAVID FERGUSON
Central Secretariat
13 October 1997



DESK IMMEDIATE

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
PS/Mr Murphy (DFP, B&L)
PS/Mr Ingram (DED, B&L)
PS/Mr Worthington (DENI, DHSS&L)
PS/Lord Dubs (DANI, DOE&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Mr Semple
Mr Thomas
Mr Steele
Mr Leach
Mr Bell
Mr Watkins
Mr Stephens
Mr Beeton
Mr Brooker
Mr Hill
Mr Canavan
Mr Maccabe
Mr Whysall
Mr Fergusson, RID FCO (via IPL)
HMA Dublin (via IPL)
Mr N Warner

Mr Woods

VICTIMS OF TERRORISM

1. At the time of writing (12.30 pm) it is not clear whether the PM will refer to the possibility of a memorial for the victims of terrorism during his visit today; but if he does it is anticipated that he will draw on the formulation at Annex A. The purpose of this note is to provide a brief line for Ministers and the Press Office to take in response to any follow-up probing over the next day or so.

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Background

2. Mr Trimble has recently added to the Unionists' list of confidence-building measures the need to mark the sacrifices made by the victims of terrorism. Although the UUP have previously floated the idea of a "commission" to look further into the question of victims of violence, it seems that they are not necessarily wedded to the approach. The important thing, they have stressed, is that Government should recognise that something should be done for the victims.
3. The point has already been acknowledged by the Prime Minister in his "Newsletter" article published on 13 September, which followed the Secretary of State's meeting with the promoters of the initiative in the middle of August. I understand that Mr Trimble has been pressing the PM to make a further, more detailed statement during the visit today as a counterbalance to the publicity which Sinn Fein will be getting.

Response

4. The Secretary of State discussed the formulation at Annex A with Mr Semple and Mr Watkins at Aldergrove this morning, shortly before the PM's arrival. It is not intended to go beyond this wording; but internally the Secretary of State's clear preference is that while there should be some form of central control over how the matter is taken forward Government should keep a considered distance from it. She has suggested that perhaps the views of the Community Relations Council should be sought on what might be appropriate.

Line to take

5. This is clearly a minefield. In anticipation that the issue does surface publicly today, we will need to be able to respond to further probing. I suggest the following broad line to take:

Ministers have no prior views on what form a memorial should take. This is clearly a sensitive issue, given the tragedies of the past and the divisions that remain. Whatever its form, we shall be seeking to ensure that it is a fitting tribute acknowledged by both sides of the community and that it contributes to the spirit of peace and reconciliation which is fundamental to the current talks process.

6. I also attach at Annex B some Q&A material which might be used in response to probing.

(Signed)

D G FERGUSON

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ANNEX A

VICTIMS OF TERRORISM: TEXT TO BE DRAWN ON BY PM

The key point about these talks is that they bring together for the first time, for political and democratic discussion, those who had previously been fighting each other.

The involvement of all parties is very important if, as we aim, we are to achieve, by entirely democratic means, a durable peace.

But we fully understand that this process is particularly difficult for those, on both sides and in many places, who have lost loved ones or who will always carry the scars, physical or psychological, of the many tragedies of the last 30 years. That enormous pool of suffering must never be forgotten.

That is, for me, a powerful incentive to secure a just and lasting peace. But we are also considering ways to commemorate those who died and those who suffer and continue to suffer. We will be seeking a means to commemorate those who have suffered and died and as an earnest of our common determination to find more harmonious ways of resolving differences.

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VICTIMS OF TERRORISM - Q & A MATERIAL

Q: Where will the memorial be situated?

A: There are, of course, different forms which a memorial could take. If a physical memorial is decided upon, its location will be for consideration. We have no prior views.

Q: Will there be consultation on the form of the memorial and on its location?

A: Ministers are giving consideration to how best to canvass opinion on what would be appropriate.

Q: Will a memorial commemorate all who have died in the troubles, including terrorists?

A: We are considering ways to commemorate those who died and those who suffered and continue to suffer. This is clearly a sensitive and emotive issue. We shall want to ensure that, whatever is done, it recognises those sensitivities, helps heal divisions and contributes to the spirit of reconciliation which remains an essential building block of a durable and lasting peace.

Q: Will the victims of Bloody Sunday be commemorated as part of the memorial?

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A:

It is important to recognise that the conflict has affected all of the people of these islands. Any memorial should be a symbol of remembrance for all who have suffered and died.

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