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John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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19 July 1996

Dear John,

SECRETARY OF STATE'S TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH DR PAISLEY

1. The Secretary of State had a brief telephone conversation with Dr Paisley this morning at the latter's request. Dr Paisley particularly wanted to talk about prospects for the Apprentice Boys Parade in Derry on 10 August.
2. Dr Paisley said that he was having a meeting tomorrow morning with David Trimble and the Apprentice Boys to assess the prospects. He would then go to Hume who was active in trying to ensure that there was not a problem. In a slightly cryptic reference he said that the Ecumenical Churchmen may query the pitch (Comment: I suppose he may be referring to the four main church leaders). The Secretary of State said that his main worry was that Sinn Fein would influence the locals to try and repeat the victory over the RUC that the Orangemen had achieved. Paisley agreed that this was a potential problem and said that the SDLP were not helping by allowing Mark Durkan to share platforms with Martin McGuinness.
3. The Secretary of State said that the SDLP were feeling squeezed at the moment as a result of recent events. He had spoken to Hume who he agreed was personally engaged in trying to resolve the Apprentice Boys March. He thought it was useful for Dr Paisley to exploit the good relationship he had with Hume to encourage that. Paisley said that

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he was also proposing to talk to Seamus Mallon.

He

had refused to meet the UUP yesterday, while at the same time taking the contradictory position that we needed to move as fast as possible into substantive Talks.

- Q. Paisley said that he was proposing to have a meeting with Mitchell on Monday to discuss his (Paisley's) proposal for a "spleen venting" meeting. He said that the Government needed to steady Unionists who were feeling very distrustful. The Secretary of State said his concern about a "venting" session was that there would be a lot of empty chairs around the table. Paisley said not to worry about that. There was a need to talk to political opponents.

The Secretary of State said there was apparently a substantive difference between Mallon and Hume at the moment. Mallon was effectively thinking that the Talks were all over, whereas Hume wanted to carry on. What was needed, clearly, was a means of speeding up progress so that we could get the decommissioning question on an even keel, possibly through the establishment of a sub-committee, before a break and thus avoid the SDLP concern about the Talks resuming with decommissioning at the head of the agenda. Paisley said he agreed with this but there was a need to get it right. He made the point that Hume was never at the Talks. He personally was happy to give up his holiday if Talks needed to carry on.

- Q. The Secretary of State said that Mitchell himself was very jumpy. If he left that would bring the Talks to an end. Paisley agreed, but said that Mitchell would not give up. He had too much politically at stake in the process.

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Comment

A very civil conversation with Paisley in apparently constructive mood and in reasonably good humour. He seems genuinely determined to make use of the good personal relationship he has with John Hume to help ensure that we do not have a repeat of Portadown when the Apprentice Boys march in August.

I have copied this to Colin Budd and Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

Yours

Martin

MARTIN HOWARD

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