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Meeting now
arranged.

From: JOHN HOLMES

Date: 15 July 1996

PRIME MINISTER

File John 16/7.

MEETINGS WITH NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICIANS

I mentioned to you the bids for calls on you in the near future from Hume and Alderdice, and the promise of a future call from the heads of the Loyalist parties. ✓

The diary for the rest of the week is very difficult, but Arabella can probably make space somehow for one or two meetings if necessary. The Loyalists can wait for a while, although you should see them before the end of the month, as long as their ceasefire holds. As you suggested, in many ways Hume does not "deserve" a meeting, having withdrawn from the Forum. But I think it is still important that you see him this week. You were available for the Unionists leaders at short notice last week. Whatever the rights and wrongs, there is no doubt of the intensity of feeling on the Nationalist side about what happened. For the sake of balance, to keep channels open, and to allow some of the steam to be dissipated, I hope you will agree to see him. Paddy Mayhew is strongly in favour (though he would, wouldn't he).

I cannot promise it will be an easy meeting. But you can give as good as you get, and I believe it is a necessary process to go through. It is also a chance to discuss again his contacts with Adams and his "initiative".

The case for Alderdice is less obviously strong/urgent. His is a smaller party, less directly involved. But he is in general a force for good and deserves encouragement where you can give it. And he was certainly very depressed by last week's events, as you know. Are you willing to see him either this week, if we can squeeze in a short meeting, or early next week if not?

John

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OK