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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

26 June 1996

Dear Mr. Teahan,

NORTHERN IRELAND: IRISH VIEWS

Paddy Teahan was in London for a conference today, and came round for tea. We talked over the main issues, without breaking much new ground. But a few points may be worth recording.

(i) Belfast talks: Teahan's views were similar to ours. It was hard work but worth the effort. He agreed that the Irish Government needed to keep talking to the UUP - he believed Trimble wanted to make deals. He

His main concern was whether any real progress would be made before the summer break. He thought Trimble would be reluctant to agree anything substantive before the Drumcree march. His own view was that it would not be disastrous if no real progress had been made by mid-July, but others in Dublin would be harder to convince. The difficult part would of course be decommissioning.

(ii) Sinn Fein/IRA: Teahan thought a new ceasefire was possible, but did not sound convinced it was likely. He thought the IRA would wait to see how the talks went, especially on decommissioning. We discussed briefly how we should react to a new ceasefire. Teahan's idea was that we should use insistence on the Mitchell principles to try to force increased credibility in what Sinn Fein were saying. Teahan did not see a split in the republican movement as at all likely in the short term, though it was probably inevitable in the context of an actual settlement.

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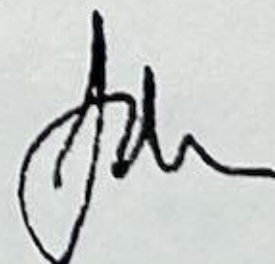
(iii) Renewed violence: I said that another major attack here could bring the prospect of internment into play. Teahon's comments suggested that he was not shocked by this thought. The Irish public were themselves shocked by all the recent evidence of violence in Ireland, including the murder of an Irish journalist earlier today. And we knew how the Taoiseach felt about the IRA...

(iv) SDLP: Teahon was worried about the divisions in the party, exemplified by Hume and Mallon's differing attitudes. They would be difficult to manage and keep together during the process.

(v) Final Settlement: I reminded Teahon of the sensitivity of the conversation between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. He was already fully sensitised, but took the point.

I am copying this to William Ehrman (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

Yours ever



JOHN HOLMES

Martin Howard Esq
Northern Ireland Office

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