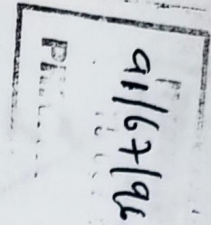


CONFIDENTIAL**10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA**

49 16 OCT 1996



From the Private Secretary

14 October 1996

Dear Sir,

IRA VIOLENCE**RECEIVED**

15 OCT 1996

ASSISTANT SEC
CPL 1359

I have been struck again recently by the widespread conviction in some circles about two related views: first, that the IRA were forced back into violence by our 18 months of inactivity following the August 1994 ceasefire (eg. we did not fulfill promises to the IRA, and we could have convened talks if we had wanted to); and second, that the South Quay bomb on 9 February pushed us into declaring a firm date for all-party talks.

These views are in danger of becoming so embedded that they become part of the accepted history, rather than propaganda put out by Sinn Fein and swallowed by their supporters and sympathisers. It seems to me therefore that there is a case for a clearly argued refutation of both these claims, based on the considerable evidence. This could take the form of a Ministerial press article, perhaps but not necessarily signed by the Prime Minister, or a Government publication of some kind, or a piece by some more neutral source, stimulated by us.

I would be grateful if you and the Cabinet Office could give some thought to this. It might be a suitable subject for the new Strategic Information Committee when it meets.

I am copying this to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir John Kerr in Washington and Veronica Sutherland in Dublin (both by fax).

Yours
JOHN HOLMESKen Lindsay Esq
Northern Ireland Office**CONFIDENTIAL**