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File
John 177.

From: John Holmes
Date: 11 March 1997

PRIME MINISTER

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH THE TAOISEACH

I mentioned to you last week that the Taoiseach was keen to speak to you on the telephone. You were reluctant, given the way the Taoiseach used the conversation for his own political purposes last time. ✓

I have discussed this again with Paddy Teahon, and he has talked to the Taoiseach. The net result is more or less a promise that the Taoiseach will not publicise what is said – for example he asked Paddy to mention to me his concern about Roisin McAliskey, rather than raise it with you himself, to avoid any suspicion that he was doing it just for the public record. So your conversation should be private, although the fact of it having taken place would no doubt come out. ✓

The Taoiseach does not seem to have a particular drum he wants to beat. He just believes that it is sensible for you to talk from time to time. In this case he wants to touch base before he leaves for Washington at the weekend. He will be talking to Clinton and is anxious to know your mind before he does so, following the suspension of the talks. As you know, he has had thoughts of new initiatives, even during the election campaign – for example you and he declaring your ✓

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intention to appeal to the people of Northern Ireland for a settlement on the basis of the Joint Framework Document. But I think he was been persuaded that trying to do anything new now will simply result in the parties taking up irrevocably hostile positions in the pre-electoral atmosphere.

The Irish know roughly where we are on Hume/Adams, and this may come up in the conversation. But Bruton is unlikely to push you much on Sinn Fein – he is too suspicious of them himself.

Content to speak briefly to the Taoiseach, for example at 1230 or 1630 on Thursday?



JOHN HOLMES

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