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From: John Holmes

Date: 4 April 1997

PRIME MINISTER

cc: Philip Barton

## NORTHERN IRELAND

The picture on a suspension/ceasefire remains confused as I leave for a week's holiday. Philip will hold the fort in my absence.

a suspension to take effect from Thursday, 10 April, has not been contradicted, but Mitchell McLaughlin and others have gone out of their way to say categorically that a new IRA ceasefire before the Election is not on the cards. Two possible explanations are either that the feedback from the grass roots has been such that the leadership have had to abandon their plans (but we have not – yet – seen evidence of this); or that the suspension will be unannounced, and designed simply to ensure that there are no embarrassing violent incidents in Northern Ireland in the three weeks before the Election. This would explain why the suspension would apparently only apply to Northern Ireland, since voters there would be presumed to be less concerned about bombs over here.

The second explanation is plausible. As I have commented before, we could make PR hay out of an announced suspension. But this remains only speculation. Meanwhile I understand that John Hume remains active, and that we may get something further from him next week.

I have put in the box separately a reply from you to Albert Reynolds.

John Holmes



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