

CONFIDENTIAL



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file
21 Contacts - SM
cc JP
AC
P Mc
PB

From the Private Secretary

15 May 1997

Dear Ken,

IRISH CONTACTS WITH SINN FEIN

Paddy Teahon told me today that, in response to a message from Sinn Fein asking for a meeting and saying that this was in the context of a ceasefire being in sight, the Irish had agreed to meet them at official level. They would be doing so this Saturday. Teahon said that the message from Sinn Fein had fulfilled the essential Irish condition for such a meeting. But he conceded that there might be an element of electoral politics in this, not least in the wake of Bertie Ahearn's meeting with Adams yesterday.

I told Teahon in confidence where we were. I gave him a rough outline of the speech, and hoped that the Irish Government would not over-react to the Unionist reassurances it contained.

Teahon took note. He said that he would be in touch over the weekend or on Monday to give me a read out of their meeting.

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

Yours sincerely
John

JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay Esq
Northern Ireland Office

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SM