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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

10 June 1997

Dee Hen,

IRISH CONTACTS WITH SINN FEIN

Paddy Teahon had a meeting with Rita O'Hare yesterday, at O'Hare's request, to enable her to explain what had happened at Poleglass. She claimed that the leadership were not aware of the bomb and did not want it to happen. She also said that Sinn Fein were serious about the efforts being pursued currently, and that a ceasefire could be put in place before the marching season. She asked for a full meeting with Irish officials.

Teahon made clear to her that the Irish Government had no time for any kind of twin-track Sinn Fein policy. It was wrong, and also made no political sense whatsoever. He added (on the basis of what I had told him) that the new Prime Minister could be even tougher in this area than his predecessor. He would not accept being messed around by Sinn Fein. O'Hare denied that there was any question of messing around. Teahon also said that he could not agree to a full official meeting in present circumstances.

Teahon commented that he did not find O'Hare's line convincing. Like us, the Irish believed that the Poleglass bomb was a deliberate part of the IRA/Sinn Fein strategy, although they differed from us in thinking that it was probably not intended to go off.

I noted that the IRA had just fired on an army patrol in Northern Ireland. This was the third incident. There looked to be no doubt that the IRA were pursuing a renewed campaign of violence. This was mad from any point of view.

I took the opportunity to tell Teahon that we would probably be in touch with the Irish Government in the next day or so with a text explaining our

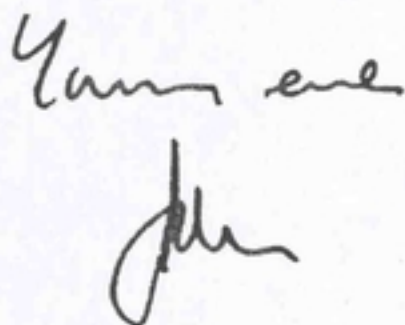
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position, which we would propose to give to Sinn Fein. He welcomed this. But he was also anxious that we should sort out decommissioning very soon, and that the Prime Minister and the new Taoiseach should have a discussion about where we would go if a combination of a new initiative to Sinn Fein and agreement on decommissioning caused the talks process to collapse. It was not a question of going into detail but agreeing a broad strategy. I made no commitment.

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

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Holmes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

JOHN HOLMES

K. Lindsay, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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