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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

S 51 /97

File.

From the Private Secretary

SUBJECT
MASTER

2 June 1997

Filed on:

Dear Gen,

NORTHERN IRELAND: MOVING THE PROCESS FORWARD

The Prime Minister saw Dr Mowlam's minute of 30 May over the weekend, and discussed it with Dr Mowlam and others this morning. Discussion focussed on the right balance between trying to create the conditions for a new ceasefire/Sinn Fein's entry, and not lengthening unnecessarily the odds against Trimble staying in, or coming back to, the talks. No final decisions were taken but it was agreed that:

- no meeting should be arranged between officials and Sinn Fein this week. We needed to assess further the Poleglass incident over the weekend;
- no text should be sent to Sinn Fein or others at present. Irish elections were in any case a complication. Meanwhile a fresh look should be taken at this, to take account of comments made in the meeting.

I should record that, from a brief discussion after the call by Senator Mitchell, the Prime Minister remains concerned about the idea of tabling, and appearing to negotiate, a text on the lines proposed. His strong preference remains to clarify further Sinn Fein's concerns and respond to them orally, on the lines of the draft, in another meeting at official level; and then to make a speech himself, offering Sinn Fein a date (which may or may not be as early as July) and addressing their other concerns, but in his own words, not in agreed language. He would want to be particularly reassuring about decommissioning, as far as compatible with our support for Mitchell, as well as about CBMs and the timescale.

I assume you will now send us further advice in the course of this week, not least in the light of discussions in and around the restart of the talks. It

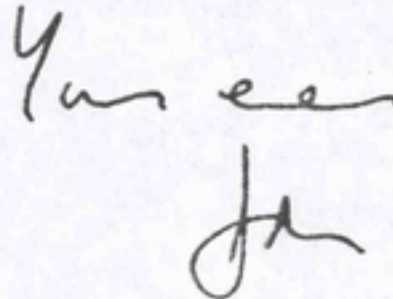
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would also be helpful to have a clear steer on what should be said meanwhile to Trimble, when the Prime Minister sees him at 1730 on Wednesday.

I am copying this letter to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

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

JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay Esq
Northern Ireland Office

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