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*cc JH  
AE*

From: John Holmes  
Date: 27 August 1997

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND: IRA CEASEFIRE

Sorry to burden you with more paper for tomorrow morning's meeting with Mo, but her paper on inviting Sinn Fein to join the talks has just arrived. I attach it.

As I suggested in my earlier note, there can be no real doubt about the decision. The IRA's adherence to its ceasefire has been impressive, and better than in 1994. We have no real grounds for not now inviting them to the talks.

At the same time, it is worth noting that it is not so easy to argue that Sinn Fein have really "established a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods, and shown that they abide by the democratic process". There is no evidence so far of IRA willingness to give up violence for good, or a Sinn Fein belief that they should. The Unionists are likely to pick up on this.

I also slightly wonder about the penultimate paragraph of Mo's minute, suggesting that Sinn Fein should now be treated like all other parties. This should presumably wait at least until after they have signed up to the Mitchell principles. Even then, we must remain aware that they are still a long way from moving away from mixing politics and violence as it suits them.

*JH*

JOHN HOLMES

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