

FAXED 10 SEPT

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
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10 September 1997

Dear John,

FOREIGN VISITORS TO NORTHERN IRELAND

Thank you for your letter of 28 August to Ken Lindsay. Mr Murphy has also seen Dominick Chilcott's letter of 5 September to you.

In Dr Mowlam's absence, Mr Murphy is grateful for the Prime Minister's agreement that visits by Heads of State and Government to Northern Ireland could usefully help to encourage the political process. We have set up a joint NIO/FCO group to plan the arrangements for such an event.

The Minister accepts the arguments against holding the forthcoming Anglo-French summit in Northern Ireland, not least as it could well follow so hard on the heels of a visit by Mrs Clinton.

We shall be exploring future possible events for Northern Ireland in the joint NIO/FCO planning group. But the Mr Murphy believes that there is a strong case for one of the forthcoming EU Ministerial informals to be held in Northern Ireland. We understand that a schedule, agreed internally, is to be communicated to our EU partners shortly. Of those scheduled, 6 are to be held in various parts of England, 2 in Scotland and the summit in Wales. Northern Ireland is now very noticeable by its absence.

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From our perspective the most attractive informal in policy terms is the regional policy meeting which I understand may be held in Glasgow (Foreign Ministers are to meet in Edinburgh). Mr Murphy appreciates that change in location for any of the informals is likely to prove unwelcome, particularly as we are close to communicating our list of venues to partners, but believes that we must seize the opportunity provided by the new ceasefire to include Northern Ireland as a venue on a par with Scotland, Wales and English regions; and that the regional policy informal seems most suited in policy terms in particular. He would therefore be grateful for the Prime Minister's and colleagues' agreement to hold it in Northern Ireland.

Copies of this letter go to William Ehrman, John Alty, Michael Lugton, June Milligan and to Jan Polley.

Yours sincerely,
Richard Lemon

RICHARD LEMON
Private Secretary to Paul Murphy MP

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