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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARYCCPD
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File JN 29/9

John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON

25 September 1997

Dear John,

FOREIGN VISITORS TO NORTHERN IRELAND

Richard Lemon wrote to you on 10 September exploring possible visits by Heads of State/Government to Northern Ireland, and urging agreement on holding the EU regional policy Ministerial informal under UK presidency in Northern Ireland. John Grant's letter of 15 September to you helpfully supported the general proposition but sought early decisions on the informal so that EU partners may be informed in good time. It might be useful to report the current position as we see it.

Officials here have had a useful and constructive meeting with FCO colleagues on possible future visits. The Anglo-French summit is of course past the post in planning terms; we understand that the Italian summit has slipped into the second half of 1998, although Dr Mowlam will want to consider bidding for it then; and we believe that arrangements for the German summit are now less clear-cut. The last has, we understand, turned into essentially a single meeting. Dr Mowlam considered whether it would meet our objectives if it were to be held in Northern Ireland; but has concluded that it would not, mainly because it does not seem best geared to the sort of widespread positive PR, national and international, that we seek, and in any case we have a good stream of significant visits over the near future. We are not therefore bidding to host the Kohl meeting.

Apart from your own plans (your letter of 16 September) we have firm prospects of:

- ♦ Mrs Clinton (31 October)
- ♦ US Commerce Secretary Daley (4 November).

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This series of high-level visits will provide for positive stories both here and internationally. Beyond that, the EU regional policy informal apart, we are working closely and constructively with the FCO on a range of possibilities for 1998. We will need to keep closely in touch with both you and the FCO as plans mature. In the meantime, it would be helpful to have an early indication of the outcome on the EU informal.

On a similar theme, Dr Mowlam is working up a programme of events in Northern Ireland which should generate substantial positive publicity here. We are planning to use the traditional annual garden party to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Health Service. Dr Mowlam is writing to the Chancellor about a function focusing on economic development in Northern Ireland which he might like to attend. And the Secretary of State is planning a number of ways of opening up places like Stormont for events such as concerts, as a further means of both generating positive news and also beginning to change historical images.

I am copying this to John Grant (FCO).

Yours ever,

Ken

W K LINDSAY

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