

B/S



cc PS/SofS (BrL)
 PS/Sir S. Walker (BrL)
 PS/M. Anson (BrL)
 AS/PUS (BrL)
 PS/Sir S. Bell
 Mr Thomas
 Mr Steele
 Mr Bell

Mr Stephens
 Mr Watkins
 Mr Hill
 Mr Ray
 Mr Macdonald
 Mr Wood

Northern Ireland Office
 Stormont Castle
 Belfast BT4 3ST

14 NOV 1996

Dr Smyth
 Mr McKenna

Senator George J Mitchell
 Office of the Independent Chairmen
 Castle Buildings
 BT4 3SG

File 13 November 1996

Imp.

C14/14

Dear George :

As you know, some of the participants in the Talks raised questions about possible contacts between your staff and Sinn Fein. More recently Dr Paisley has repeated this suggestion, saying in addition that there is a security report indicating that there has been some such contact. Your staff raised this with my office yesterday morning.

Perhaps I could say at the outset that I regard the question of what contacts you, your colleagues and your staff make as entirely a matter for your judgement and discretion. As you know, we have suggested no stipulations about this.

In plenary you volunteered, when the matter was raised, that neither you, your colleagues nor your staff have met representatives of Sinn Fein or the IRA since your present appointment.

I fully accept your assurance and I am happy to make clear that I know of nothing which should lead me to conclude otherwise.

I am sending copies of this letter to General de Chastelain, Prime Minister Holkeri and to the Irish Government delegation to the Talks.

Sincerely,
 P. Keogh