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From the Principal Private Secretary

22 February 1998

See her,

**NORTHERN IRELAND: CONVERSATION WITH  
PRESIDENT CLINTON, 22 FEBRUARY**

After the Prime Minister and Clinton had discussed Iraq this evening, they spoke briefly about Northern Ireland. Clinton asked how the Prime Minister thought Friday's decision had gone down.

The Prime Minister said that we had been attacked on all sides, which might have helped. He was grateful for the President's statement. Clinton said that Adams was no longer coming to Washington next week. That was good news. The Prime Minister agreed. We needed huge pressure on Adams, not least from the US, to get Sinn Fein back into the process. His view was that Adams had not really wanted renewed violence but his hand had been forced. However any more significant violence would make it impossible for Sinn Fein to come back. The bomb at Moira on Friday night was probably the work of a fringe group. Adams was asking for a meeting with him. He would probably be prepared to do that but not yet. Meanwhile Sinn Fein's absence should be used to persuade the Unionists into a more forthcoming position on North-South issues. As long as the three governments stuck together, we could get through this.

Clinton agreed. He would work closely with the Prime Minister and not undercut us in any way.

I am copying this to John Grant (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir Christopher Meyer (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

Yours  
John Holmes

Ken Lindsay Esq  
Northern Ireland Office

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