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From the Principal Private Secretary

18 March 1998

Dear Ken,

PARADES COMMISISON: PRELIMINARY VIEW

Thank you for your letter of 13 March, which I have shown to the Prime Minister. This is clearly a difficult call. The arguments you set out for not interfering with the Commission are strong. On the other hand, 31 March could turn out to be a very bad date from the wider point of view of the Talks, depending on where they are by then and what is in the Commission's preliminary view. In many ways it would be better if they could postpone their announcement by a couple of weeks. But I understand that one of the contentious parades on which they may wish to take a view is itself over Easter. I assume that, if this is the case, they will insist on saying something before Easter and there is little point in us suggesting, through whatever discreet channel, any delay. But can we check these points? If we wanted to exercise a bit of discreet persuasion, what channel would we use?

More widely, do we have any idea what they are going to say in their announcement, in particular about Drumcree?

JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay Esq
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