

*Ireland : Visits**AME
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10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Private Secretary

31 July 1996

*Dear Ken,***NORTHERN IRELAND: POSSIBLE VISIT**

The Prime Minister is conscious that he has not paid a proper visit to Northern Ireland this year, apart from his brief trip to the opening of the talks on 10 June. He therefore sees potential merit in a visit in the early autumn, both to reaffirm his commitment to the province and to the peace process, and to get a better feel at first hand for the views of the various communities and parties.

A visit might also provide a good opportunity for a speech setting out the Government's latest thinking. This would of course depend on the circumstances at the time, and whether these provide an opportunity for the Prime Minister to say something new and worthwhile.

The Prime Minister would be grateful for advice both on the merit of these ideas and the best timing for them, if they are regarded as desirable. Should a visit precede the resumption of the talks, for example, or would it be better to wait until the immediate hurdle of decommissioning has been surmounted, assuming this is possible? **It would be helpful to have your views by the last week of August at the latest.**

I am copying this to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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