

SECRET - PERSONAL

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

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file

From the Private Secretary

25 April 1996

Dear John,

**POSSIBLE VISIT BY THE PRIME MINISTER**

We spoke about this on the telephone. I have explained to the Prime Minister your view that he cannot now visit sensibly before the elections, since this could too easily be misrepresented or mixed up undesirably in the election campaign. I therefore suggested that he might either go for the opening of the talks themselves, but only if it is clear that the opening session will be serious and dignified, and not an occasion for grandstanding or walk-outs by either side. Alternatively, if there is uncertainty about this (as is perhaps likely), he should try to visit after the beginning of the talks but before the marching season starts on 12 July.

The Prime Minister accepts this advice. It is clearly too soon to decide between the two alternatives, but you may like to start thinking now about what the Prime Minister might do on this visit, whether or not it coincides with the beginning of the talks. Are there particular places he ought to go, where he has not been before or not for some time, or are there particular people or groups of people he ought to see? I would be grateful for further advice in due course.

Yours ever  
John

JOHN HOLMES

Sir John Chilcot KCB  
Northern Ireland Office

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