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LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

1 December 1994

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 24 November.

The Government would like to begin this month the exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein, on the basis which has been set out in a number of statements. The Prime Minister is glad to note the confirmation in your letter that Sinn Fein will join the dialogue. The exploratory talks will be a vital step in the process of consolidating a lasting peace in Northern Ireland through a common commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and the democratic process.

Thank you for informing us that Mr Martin McGuinness will represent Sinn Fein in these matters. Mr Quentin Thomas, Deputy Secretary at the Northern Ireland Office, will lead the team of officials representing the Government at the first meeting. He will be writing today to Mr McGuinness about the detailed arrangements, and will be proposing that the meeting should be held in Belfast on Wednesday 7 December.

RODERIC LYNE

Gerry Adams, Esq.

(3)

10.30.94

[Exploratory talks. For morning lobby, 1 December]

NO.10 PRESS STATEMENT

On 21 October the Prime Minister announced that the Government would be ready to convene exploratory talks with Sinn Fein before the end of the year, on the assumption that the IRA ceasefire was intended to be permanent.

No.10 has now written to Sinn Fein to propose a date - 7 December - for the opening of this exploratory dialogue. At this meeting the Government will be represented by senior officials acting under Ministerial direction. The opening and continuation of the dialogue of course depends on Sinn Fein's continued commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and the democratic process.

No.10's letter is attached. The NIO will follow up by making detailed arrangements.