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From the Private Secretary

25 November 1993

cc PS/Sgt S(B)
on PS/Michael Ancram (L+B)
LPS/PVS (L)
PS/Mr Fell
Mr Thomas
Mr Cooke
Mr Rickard
Mr Beeton
Mr May

du/v

MISS MELANIE LEECH
CABINET OFFICE

NORTHERN IRELAND: CABINET SECRETARY'S VISIT TO DUBLIN

Copies of this minute should not be distributed beyond Private Offices, and it should be handled on a strict need to know basis.

I understand that it has now been confirmed that Sir Robin Butler will go to Dublin on 26 November to present the British draft of a joint statement to the Taoiseach.

I enclose a letter from the Prime Minister to the Taoiseach for delivery by Sir Robin. The Prime Minister thought that we should expose less surface than was in the draft attached to Jonathan Stephens' letter of 23 November. The text has been redrafted accordingly.

For similar reasons, the Prime Minister would like paragraphs 6 and 7 of Sir Robin's speaking notes to be adjusted. The last sentence of paragraph 6 should be deleted. So should the second sentence of paragraph 7. The first sentence of paragraph 7 might be replaced by the following:

"The British Government cannot put itself in the position of negotiating with the Provisional IRA, whether directly or through intermediaries. This would contradict categorical assurances repeatedly given in the House of Commons by Ministers. The text I am giving you, therefore, is for discussion between our two Governments - just as we have previously held discussions about the joint declaration."

I should be grateful if Sir Robin Butler could give copies of these papers to H.M. Ambassador at Dublin.

I am sending copies of this minute and of its enclosure to Jonathan Stephens (Northern Ireland Office), John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jeremy Heywood (H.M. Treasury), Joan MacNaughton (Home Office) and John Pitt-Brooke (Ministry of Defence).

Roderic Lyne

RODERIC LYNE
25 November 1993

It was good to talk to you last Saturday. I am sorry to hear that you had a busy weekend off. I hope that you will get some relaxation during your trip. If I may say so, I thought your interview with David Frost went very well.

Making no bones about it, we have had an extremely difficult and depressing week. I need not labour the reasons why. I had allowed myself to feel a little optimistic after my meeting with Robin James on 15 November. But I am afraid that the following day's leak and the Russ/Adams statement on Saturday last have had precisely the effect I feared when we spoke on the phone.

I have spent all week trying to repair the damage through a series of meetings and public statements. I fear that I have had only limited success. In the current political atmosphere, there is clearly no hope of securing even tacit acceptance by the British mainstream of a Joint Declaration on the lines of your draft. The text would be seen as deriving from Russ/Adams, and thus would not be the product of negotiation with Sinn Féin. This is an impression which successive statements from Russ and Adams have done nothing to dispel. As we have agreed all along, acceptance with Russ/Adams is the price of any text intended to secure acceptance on both sides of the Community.