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From the Private Secretary

24 November 1993

cc PS/SOFS (B) - 1

PS/PUS(L) - 2

Mr Thomas - 3

PS/Mr Fell - 4

Mr Beverell - 5

Mr Cooke - 6

Mr Rickard - 7

Mr Beeton - 8

Mr May - 9

Dear Jonathan,

### TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH MARTIN MANSERGH

Martin Mansergh telephoned me late on the evening of 24 November, evidently on the Taoiseach's instructions. The call followed earlier probes by the Taoiseach's Press Secretary to Gus O'Donnell. The purpose of both calls was to try to find out when, and if possible in what sense, we would be replying on the Joint Declaration. Mansergh rambled on for at least 20 minutes until, mercifully, he was summoned to report back to the Taoiseach; but the essence of his message was as before. We would miss the opportunity if we did not act before Christmas. We needed to put PIRA on the spot. The Joint Declaration was the only way of doing so. Eames still supported it. Alderdice was still taking an encouraging line. The Taoiseach was committed to "going the whole way" (renewed implication that the Taoiseach would go for a declaration, without or without us).

Mansergh down-played, to a remarkable degree, the damage done by the Irish leak, and the Hume/Adams statement. He was repentant about the leak, but spoke as if it had been not much more than a temporary blip. As for Hume/Adams, he felt that the Taoiseach's remarks on the Frost programme had corrected the balance.

Mansergh said that the Irish had been pleased to note that Conservative MPs were continuing to support the Prime Minister's stance, as was the British Press. He spoke as if the main impediment to forward movement on our part lay in Westminster rather than in Northern Ireland. I said that this was completely wrong. 95% of the difficulty lay in Northern Ireland. We had been relatively optimistic up until the evening of Thursday, 18 November, but the leak caused a virtual shipwreck. Since Friday, we had been working like mad to try to limit and repair the damage; but serious damage had been done and



we were now in a much more difficult environment. The crucial factor for us had all along been to take a course of action which was viable. The leak had re-awakened Unionist fears stretching back to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and before that to Sunningdale.

I said that we had some further work to do tomorrow. Following that, we might be able to propose that someone should visit Dublin to see the Taoiseach; but this was not a bankable assurance.

Comment

Mansergh's blithe inability to comprehend the depth of Unionist suspicions would be astonishing were it not of a piece with previous misreadings by him and the Taoiseach. The only point on which we really agreed was that it was desirable to put the PIRA on the spot, rather than allow Adams to present himself as the man making proposals for peace.

I am copying this letter to John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and to Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

*yours ever,  
Roderic*

**RODERIC LYNE**

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Northern Ireland Office