



Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

30 December, 1993.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

The Right Hon. Mr. John Major,
Prime Minister.

Dear John,

I trust you enjoyed your Christmas break.

I would like to acknowledge, if I have not said it to you before, that adopting the Joint Declaration and the strategy behind it required considerable political courage on your part. I hope that we will all be rewarded by peace in due course. (In a comment last night I indicated that I was not necessarily expecting a response from the Provisionals before the end of January).

The support from all other quarters has been very gratifying. The warmth of mainstream Unionist support has been both surprising and encouraging. The Loyalist paramilitaries, which I took some trouble to cultivate indirectly, have also responded in a broadly positive way, conditional on an IRA ceasefire. The media are also strongly supportive.

So much of the ultimate success of the Declaration continues to depend on psychology. I have to say I regard the timing of the verdict in the Caraher case as particularly unfortunate, and I understand there is another case (McGovern) coming up. While I accept of course that you do not control the courts any more than I do, verdicts which tend almost automatically to exonerate the security forces, when they kill unarmed civilians in dubious circumstances, do reinforce negative instincts and perceptions at a very sensitive time, and play into the hands of the hardliners. Obviously, this is a matter that we will be raising at the next Anglo-Irish Conference.



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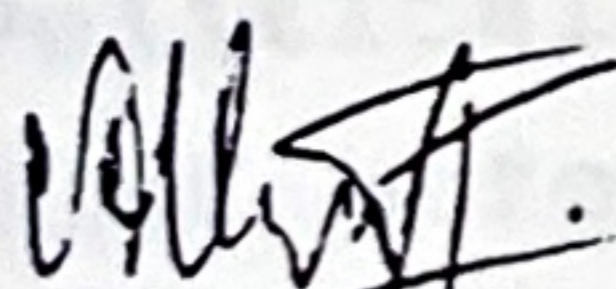
There are two points of critical importance in the weeks ahead. While the Provisionals are in a corner, from which there is no comfortable escape, it is vital, in my view, for neither Government, during their period of considering the Declaration, to appear to be bribing or threatening them, or to otherwise humiliate them. In view of the physical attacks to which British Governments and their servants have been subjected over the years, it is of course very understandable that you would wish to take a very tough line in public with them. But I feel the real chance of achieving peace must for the time being take precedence over all other considerations. If the Joint Declaration is presented publicly by us at this stage as a defeat for the IRA or as a charter for their surrender, then I greatly fear it will fail in its central purpose. The reality is that, while they have certainly not won, neither have they been militarily defeated, and they retain immense capacity to do continued harm. The only exit from a situation, which is increasingly irksome even to them, therefore has to be, in the spirit of the Joint Declaration, an honourable one.

I have not asked and am not asking you to do anything at this time that goes beyond our Joint Declaration. However, it would be very helpful if you could emphasise the balanced nature of the Declaration, and its benefits to Nationalists as well as Unionists, and if you could repeat that you will work, in accordance with its terms, to bring about agreement between the people of the island of Ireland, whatever form that agreement may take.

May I wish you a very successful New Year.

With best wishes and kind regards.

Yours sincerely,


Taoiseach.