

CONFIDENTIAL

5



346/54/93

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

20 December 1993

*✓ cc Mr. Beeton*

*2 Bond to me*

*for  
22/12*

Dear Jonathan

#### AMNESTY: DISCUSSIONS WITH MARTIN MANSERGH

At the Prime Minister's request, I rang Martin Mansergh this morning. After a general exchange about the way things were going on the Joint Declaration, I noted that the British press were seeking to drive a wedge between the British and Irish Governments over comments by the Taoiseach on such issues as security policy and a possible amnesty. The Prime Minister had set out the Government's position very clearly in the House of Commons. It seemed that the Taoiseach's comments had been given unintended meanings, but it would be helpful to avoid further comment on these issues. We were maintaining a line that what mattered was to get the IRA to agree to end violence, not hypothetical issues about what might happen in the future if they did so.

Martin Mansergh accepted these points. The Irish Government was in a similar position as the British Government in relation to an amnesty: it was nonsense to suggest that either Government might someday declare that the prison gates would be open from such and such a date. But there were some flexibilities within the law, including the discretion about when prisoners might be released, and it was this sort of thing the Taoiseach had had in mind. I accepted that there would be scope for considering such issues; but given the intense suspicions, it was preferable to avoid getting drawn into speculation.

On the more general issues, Martin Mansergh seemed pleased at how things were going; the feedback the Irish Government was getting from John Hume on Republican views was reasonably encouraging.

CONFIDENTIAL

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

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 1AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

Yours  
Alex

20 December 1997  
PS SOS L, B.  
PS / Michael Ancram L, B.  
PS / PUS (L, B)  
PS / Mr Fell  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Bell  
Mr Williams  
Mr Wood (L, B)

Dear Sir,

ALEX ALLAN

You delivered letters to me on 10 December  
meeting the Irish Prime Minister, and on 15 December  
during the meeting at which Albert Reynolds and I

- cc: PS/SOS (L+B)
- PS/ Michael Ancram (L+B)
- PS/ PUS (L+B)
- PS/ Mr Fell
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Bell
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Williams
- Mr Wood (L+B)
- Mr Brooker
- Mr Daniell
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Caine

Jonathan Stephens Esq  
Northern Ireland Office

You took issue with Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish  
This is but one of many good reasons why we should  
Irish Government.

Your letter of 15 December was written and published  
Mr Reynolds and I had issued the Joint Declaration. Unsurprisingly, you  
chose to criticise the Declaration in extreme terms before you had even had a  
chance to read it.

It would be helpful if you could read the Declaration now. If you do so,  
you will find that your claims are wholly unjustified. To take but one example  
from your letter, it is entirely untrue that I have given the Irish Government  
"joint jurisdiction ... over part of Her Majesty's dominions". You will find  
nothing in the Joint Declaration to substantiate your statement.