

DRAFT LETTER FROM RODERIC LYNE TO:
Private Secretaries to Members of the Cabinet

ANGLO-IRISH JOINT DECLARATION INITIATIVE

The Prime Minister reported to Cabinet last week that negotiations with the Irish Government on a Joint Declaration were close to completion.

2. The Prime Minister and Taoiseach will meet again in London [today/tomorrow] when the Joint Declaration will be made. (The text, which may be subject to some minor last minute adjustment, is attached.)

3. The background to the making of the Joint Declaration is a little complex. The Irish Government, and the Taoiseach in particular, have come to the view, based to some extent on contacts with the Provisional Movement, that a significant component of the organisation is looking for a way of bringing the "armed struggle" to an end. This is more than a hope, but less than a firm prediction. The Joint Declaration was conceived as a way of providing cover to enable the IRA to bring its campaign to an end, and to commit itself wholly to political and democratic methods, without acknowledging abject surrender. At the same time, and in parallel, Mr John Hume has been conducting an intermittent dialogue with the Provisional Movement, and in particular with Mr Gerry Adams, with the same objective. There have been many drafts of the Joint Declaration and the parentage of different elements in it is obscure, and may subsequently be contested.

4. Until very recently the position of the British Government,

under the direction of the Prime Minister, has been that while it would look with interest at any text presented to it by the Irish Government it would not directly negotiate on it. More recently the Prime Minister authorised a negotiation designed to ensure that the text, though clearly designed to appeal, at least at the rhetorical level, to Nationalists and Republicans, was compatible with HMG's principles and policies and was in substance acceptable to Unionists.

5. It is, of course, to be hoped that the Provisionals take the Joint Declaration as a pretext for ending the violence. But, in any event, the Prime Minister believes that making the Joint Declaration will put them on the defensive. It will also draw a line under recent pre-occupations with a "peace process", leaving the two Governments and, it is hoped, Mr John Hume, standing together.

6. In addition, the Joint Declaration may have some part to play in connection with the Talks process, though the Prime Minister acknowledges that the initial reaction to the Joint Declaration may lead to the Unionists being cautious of that. A central issue in the Talks process has been reform of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution, in return for which the Irish Government has sought some balancing move from the British Government. The Joint Declaration includes a conditional commitment to constitutional reform, in the context of an overall settlement, which is more forward and specific than the Irish Government has so far made. At the same time the document includes a more forward position from the British Government, in language if not in substance. In particular a highly qualified acknowledgement of Irish self-determination features in paragraph 4.

7. In due course the document may play a part in the further