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FROM: Q J THOMAS, DUS (L)  
30 DECEMBER 1993

cc: PS/Michael Ancram  
(L, B & DENI)  
PS/PUS (L&B)  
PS/Mr Fell  
Mr Legge  
Mr Bell  
Mr Williams  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Wood (L&B)  
Mr Daniell  
Mr Brooker  
Mr Maccabe  
Mr Quinn  
Mr Archer, RID  
HMA Dublin  
Mr Caine

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B)

**THE TALKS PROCESS: RENEWING THE DIALOGUE WITH THE IRISH GOVERNMENT**

As Michael Ancram's minute of 21 September pointed out, we need to demonstrate forward movement on the Talks process; and it will be easier to avoid confining the Ancram round to Strand One issues if the Irish Government are more forthcoming.

2. I registered before Christmas with Mr O'hUiginn our interest in reviving the work in the Liaison Group to produce a Joint Framework Document. I suggested that we should think in terms of a meeting of the Liaison Group in the New Year, though perhaps he and I might meet on our own first to set the scene. He owes me a response.

3. Regardless of that, I think there is much to be said for the Secretary of State beginning the New Year by writing to Mr Spring to point the way ahead. In particular I think the Secretary of State may want to emphasise to Mr Spring that the two Governments should

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press on with the Talks process, and thereby to make clear that there is no question of the two Governments waiting passively while the Provisional Movement concocts a response to the Joint Declaration. Evident progress on the Talks will constitute a further pressure on the Provisionals who may in any case, as more than one observer has noted, simply avoid ever responding clearly to a Declaration which has clearly given them a considerable dilemma.

4. I attach a draft letter which mentions the Joint Declaration and, in a passage I have cleared with Mr Steele, security co-operation, but majors on seeking a re-dedication to the two Governments work on the Talks Process. As will be seen I have alluded to the possibility canvassed in Mr Archer's minute of 21 December of building on the Joint Declaration in the Talks context. I myself doubt whether it will in itself remove the need for the two Governments to bring to a conclusion the work they had in hand on a Joint Framework Document, though it should certainly be a contribution to it. In particular the Taoiseach's remark in the Dail, quoted in the attached draft, about the Joint Declaration being the fairest possible statement by a British Government with regard to nationalist ideals will make it harder for the Irish Government to seek more "constitutional balance". It canvasses the idea of inviting the Liaison Group to complete its task without necessarily requiring a draft paper from the Irish side. (I suspect that it will be difficult for the Irish side to produce a paper in the light of the leak in the Irish Press. But it may also be unnecessary since both sides can use the leaked document as a useful aide memoire of the Irish approach).

5. If the Secretary of State agrees to write, I suggest that there would be advantage in despatching the letter as close to the beginning of the year as possible.

6. Perhaps I could take the opportunity of this submission to make a more general point about the posture the Secretary of State

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might adopt as we go into the New Year. There are already bids for New Year interviews and there will no doubt be other media opportunities. Clearly much interest remains focussed on the Joint Declaration and on the response of the Provisional Movement, and on what HMG would do, to "crack down" or otherwise, in the event of a rejection. (Mr Stephens letter of 29 December to Number 10 covers HMG's options). Though a number of largely negative signals are being given by the Provisional Movement, it may be that a clear answer - if it is given at all - will not emerge for some weeks. In this situation it is important that HMG should:

- (i) Keep the Provisional Movement on the defensive by emphasising that the Joint Declaration represents a fair and balanced opportunity for progress to which this should be a positive response. We should deny the Provisional Movement any pretext for rejecting the Joint Declaration. Accordingly we should emphasise the balance in the Declaration; use sparingly further emphasis on its Unionist and Partitionist aspects; play down threats of "cracking down"; and avoid dismissive remarks about Nationalist aspirations;
- (ii) Demonstrate that it is business as usual and that HMG has an agenda which it will pursue actively, particularly on the Talks. (This is of course the main point of the letter to Mr Spring).

7. I attach Bull Points on these lines which the Secretary of State may wish to draw on in the forthcoming interviews if, as I hope, he agrees to them.

SIGNED

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