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Private Secretary to the Prime Minister
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PLS
[Signature]
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N.I.O. LONDON

Dear Roderic,

LETTER TO THE TAOISEACH

Thank you for showing us the letter which the Prime Minister intends to send to the Taoiseach.

As I explained on the phone yesterday, the Secretary of State welcomes this and believes that the opportunity should be taken to reinforce with the Irish Government the message conveyed to them on the Talks process at last Friday's Intergovernmental Conference. The attached revised draft therefore inserts an extra paragraph on the Talks process. In order to keep the letter manageable, we have shortened the rest slightly.

I gather that David Blatherwick has suggested that he might seek to convey the letter personally to the Taoiseach.

A copy goes to John Sawers, HM Ambassador and Melanie Leach.

Yours sincerely,
Simon Rogers
for JONATHAN STEPHENS

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DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER

I am glad that Patrick Mayhew and Dick Spring had the chance of a thorough discussion on 28 January. This was a good time to take stock. As the days pass, it becomes harder to sustain optimism about the eventual response of the Provisionals and Sinn Fein to the Joint Declaration. But if their internal debate is still going on, we should obviously continue to do whatever we can to underline that the Joint Declaration offers a fair and balanced path into the democratic process, if only they will end violence. Patrick Mayhew and I have both gone to great lengths to spell this out. We shall go on doing so. I also had a very good meeting with John Hume a couple of weeks ago.

I should say privately that I am very concerned about the White House decision to admit Gerry Adams this week. I know that Bill Clinton was put under intense pressure by Senators and Congressmen whose support he needs on important domestic questions. Nevertheless, their argument that admitting Adams would encourage Sinn Fein and the Provisionals to accept the Joint Declaration and end violence seems to be based on a fundamental misreading of the situation. It has relieved rather than increased pressure on the Provisionals to end violence. Adams announced before leaving, with evident glee, that the Americans had not required him to renounce violence.

The Joint Declaration holds open the prospect of Sinn Fein joining democratic politics if and when violence is ended - but only then. That must continue to be right - we must not encourage them to believe that they can get access to democratic politics without an end to violence.

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Indeed, I believe it important to demonstrate that political dialogue involving the parties now committed to constitutional politics is actively moving forward through the Talks process. So I welcome your own call for an early resumption of the political Talks. You and I have both said that the Talks complement, rather than rival, the Declaration. To demonstrate that this is a reality, we now need to make urgent progress across all three strands. We should very much like to carry this forward on the basis of a clear understanding with you. The intensive contracts both Governments agreed to continue at the Conference on 28 January should therefore be directed as a matter of urgency to devising a framework to assist in the Talks process. In the meantime, as he explained to Dick Spring, Patrick Mayhew intends to float privately some notions on where, in all three strands, the Talks so far have indicated a measure of agreement - as a basis for identifying the areas where more work is required.

I am sure that it would be useful for you and me to compare notes fairly soon, preferably in a way which would not attract too much attention. As luck would have it, the rugby international at Twickenham on 19 February looks like a good opportunity, and good timing. I gather that you are likely to come over for the game. The RFU have also invited me, though I have yet to confirm that I shall be going. I hope that we can find an hour or so before or after the game for a chat.

If you would like to do this, I shall ask Roderic Lyne to be in touch with your office to work out the most convenient arrangement.

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