

SECRET AND PERSONAL

HCS/1117/93

FROM: D FELL
9 DECEMBER 1993

- cc PS/Michael Ancram (L) - B [3]
- PS/PUS (L) - B [4]
- Mr Thomas - B [5]
- Mr Legge - B [6]
- Mr Deverell - B [7]
- Mr Bell - B [8]
- Mr Brooker - B [9]
- Mr Cooke - B [10]
- Mr Rickard - B [11]
- Mr Maccabe - B [12]
- Mr Beeton - B [13]
- HMA Dublin - B [14]
- Mr Archer RID, HCO - B [15]
- File [16]

(London copies of Attachment to follow by Mufax)

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L) - B

JOINT DECLARATION: HANDLING PLAN

1. I was grateful to Mr Beeton for copying to me his submission of yesterday.
2. I remain of the view that the balance of risk continues to support a joint Declaration if it can be negotiated with the Irish. Failure to do so would cause a most damaging breach in Anglo-Irish relations, to the detriment of a search for a political solution for Northern Ireland; give a boost to Sinn Fein at SDLP's expense; and bring to the fore elements in PIRA ready to prosecute the long war for another generation. On the other hand, it can be safely predicted that the Declaration will provoke a loyalist backlash (certainly verbal and perhaps physical). (On the latter

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point, I was struck by the reactions of Martin Williams and Chris Maccabe coming fresh to the JDI5 text). But realistically it is hard to see objective or justification which could sustain loyalist violence and it would probably splutter out in course of time. The decision on the Declaration has in any case been taken: so the following observation is confined to handling.

3. Mr Maccabe points to the likely extent of the hostility with which the Declaration will be met in the Unionist community. It may help Ministers and other colleagues to assess the contemporary mood of the majority community in Northern Ireland by reading the draft findings of a study carried out by the University of Ulster at our request some months ago (London copies to follow by Mufax). (I would emphasise that this is a draft report whose recommendations are likely to change, although the substance of its findings will not. We are not therefore entitled to refer to it in public.) It seems to me to paint an accurate picture of the state of anxiety and unease within the Unionist community as it was in the September to November period - and which has become significantly more noticeable in the last couple of weeks - which must be taken into account in developing our plans for handling the announcement of the Declaration.
4. Against that background I wonder if it would be fruitful to identify some in the broadly Unionist community who, though not involved in party-politics, are nonetheless influential amongst Unionists. I have in mind people like John Dunlop, Desmond Rea and other members of the Northern Consensus Group and Jigsaw. Colleagues may identify others. If it were possible to include them in the briefing programme before the announcement rather than just afterwards, they could perhaps exercise some calming influence in what might be a volatile Unionist Community. It would be useful also to

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decide the appropriate time for me to brief NI Permanent Secretaries who will also have influence in conditioning responses to the Declaration.

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Private Secretary to the
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10 Downing Street
LONDON W1

December 1983

[Signed David Fell]

DAVID FELL

PS: My concern about the need to include trusted "non-political" Unionist figures such as John Dunlop in the pre-briefing is re-inforced by the references, in the draft letter from you to Roderic Lyne, of which I have just had sight, to the Prime Minister's intention to rally support for the Declaration "particularly among key opinion formers on the Nationalist side in Northern Ireland and in the Catholic community in Great Britain". If that is a position of substance, rather than merely one of presentation (to the Taoiseach) then I fear that by dint of ignoring Unionist opinion, we may find that all of this may badly misfire.

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held a further meeting in London next week, at which the Joint Declaration would be made. If possible, this would deliberately be somewhat in advance of media speculation.

It will be helpful for the two Heads of Governments to exchange ideas on the general handling of the Joint Declaration. The Prime Minister may wish to explain that he will be taking steps to rally support for the Declaration, particularly among key opinion formers on the nationalist side in Northern Ireland and in the Catholic community in Great Britain. In addition, five main

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