

SECRET AND PERSONAL



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*From the Private Secretary*

9 December 1993

*Dear Jonathan,*

## NORTHERN IRELAND: JOINT DECLARATION

This letter should be distributed on a strict need to know basis.

The Prime Minister held a meeting from 0900-1045 on Thursday 9 December to consider the Joint Declaration initiative, on the basis of your Secretary of State's minute of 8 December. In addition to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary, Mr. Michael Ancram, M.P., the Cabinet Secretary, John Chilcot, Quentin Thomas, and you were present. The Defence Secretary was abroad, but he had communicated his views in advance to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Ancram described his conversation on the previous day with Mr. Molyneaux, who had given him a draft document entitled "Blueprint for Stability". The Prime Minister summarised the results of the Dublin meeting of 3 December, and Sir Robin Butler described his subsequent negotiations with Irish officials. These negotiations had produced the amended draft (JD15) which was before the meeting. The draft was ad referendum to Ministers. We had received the Taoiseach's comments (my letter of 8 December to you, reporting a telephone conversation with Martin Mansergh).

Sir Patrick Mayhew said that the Irish case was that PIRA were on the brink of a cessation of violence. We could not make concessions of substance or principle. However, if it was a question of language and not substance, Unionists were likely to acquiesce in the Joint Declaration. The Prime Minister said that the Joint Declaration should be drafted with two possible objectives in mind: either a cessation of violence or, failing that, isolation of PIRA.

The meeting then considered the revised draft sentence by sentence. A number of amendments were agreed, and have been inserted by you into the text. The amended text was approved by the meeting. It was agreed that the Government should proceed with the Joint Declaration if the amendments were accepted by the Irish Government. In so doing, the Government should emphasise that it would continue also to pursue vigorously the complementary process of political talks

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involving the constitutional parties. A reference to the three-strand talks would be proposed to the Irish as part of a new paragraph at the end of the existing text.

In further discussion, the following points were made:

- the Northern Ireland Office would prepare explanatory material on the text for use with and by Ministers and Government representatives at the time the Joint Declaration was launched. Points in the text which required elucidation should be annotated. The NIO would draw up a list of examples of all-Irish bodies. Briefing material would also show the points which we had declined to accept, such as the "value" or "legitimacy" of a united Ireland. The briefing would show how the Irish government had moved a very long way in our direction;
- the Prime Minister would hold a meeting later in the day with Mr. James Molyneaux, to take further soundings on the likely attitude of mainstream Unionists;
- the timing of the third meeting with the Taoiseach to launch the Joint Declaration needed further consideration, which would take account of the Parliamentary timetable. The NIO would submit advice;
- at the time of publication, it would be important to maximise public support for the Joint Declaration in Britain and Northern Ireland. We would need a plan of action for consultation with political and church leaders and others. We should offer some briefing notes to those who agreed to support the initiative. The NIO would put preparations for the launch operation in hand immediately, consulting others who were party to the initiative;
- the NIO would also develop a contingency position to be immediately available to Ministers should PIRA reject the Joint Declaration;
- your Secretary of State and the Prime Minister would give a general account of the state of play to Cabinet.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jeremy Heywood (H.M. Treasury), John Pitt-Brooke (Ministry of Defence), Joan MacNaughton (Home Office), Juliet Wheldon (Law Officers Department) and Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

*Yours truly,*  
*Roderic Lyne*

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