

SECRET AND PERSONAL

cc PS/PUS(L)

(7)



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

Mr Thomas  
Mr Devereux  
Mr Cooke  
Mr Rickard  
Mr Beeton  
Mr May

18 October 1993

From the Private Secretary

*Dear Jonathan,*

NORTHERN IRELAND "JOINT DECLARATION INITIATIVE"

The Prime Minister held a meeting on the morning of 18 October with the Northern Ireland Secretary, the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Attorney General.

The Prime Minister noted that those attending had been briefed in advance on the Joint Declaration text proposed by the Irish Government. Intelligence reports suggested that the PIRA were looking for a way out of their pursuit of violence. The text put forward by the Irish Government was separate from the Hume/Adams document. We had not negotiated the text, but had confined ourselves to explaining to the Irish why earlier drafts were unacceptable. This text was a considerable improvement on its predecessors. It did not ask the British Government to concede any positions of principle. Nevertheless, the text was problematic, and it would be essential to have a clear reaffirmation of the constitutional guarantee. If his colleagues agreed, he would seek the views of the Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party privately. The response to the Irish Government would be given in the light of reactions of Mr Molyneux.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said that he had nothing to add to the Prime Minister's remarks.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he, too, agreed that it would be right to proceed, so long as two points were clearly established. First, the constitutional guarantee had to appear in the text. Second, the Irish Government had to understand that we would not become advocates of a united Ireland. They did not appear now to be asking us to do this.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer shared the Foreign Secretary's view. Much would depend on whether PIRA was able to implement a cessation of violence.

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The Home Secretary also agreed that it was right to proceed. We should set in hand contingency planning on the steps to be taken with regard to Sinn Fein, should a Joint Declaration be made. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland agreed that this should be examined. There were no political prisoners in Northern Ireland, and we should give no indication that PIRA members would be treated as such.

The Defence Secretary said that the text did not incorporate any embarrassing concessions or departures from policy. Some would criticise its flavour, but the substance was defensible. This would be important, should violence not cease after a Joint Declaration. There must be a cessation rather than a suspension of violence. If this came about, it would be widely recognised as a huge prize.

The Attorney General agreed with the two criteria put forward by the Foreign Secretary. He said that we should be ready to respond to queries and criticism about a number of points in the text, which he identified in the third, fourth and fifth paragraphs. The meeting discussed these points, and examined the ways in which the text protected the Government's position. It was agreed that, if the exercise went ahead, the FCO would need to examine the principles under reference in the third sentence of the third paragraph. The Attorney General also suggested that we should establish clearly whether or not a Joint Declaration on these lines risked being defined as a Treaty, and therefore as being justiciable in international fora.

After further discussion, including about the risk that certain groups such as INLA might refuse to respect a cessation of violence, it was agreed that the Prime Minister should meet Mr Molyneux as soon as possible. This meeting was then arranged for the afternoon of 18 October.

**Given the negative outcome (subject to confirmation) of the meeting with Mr Molyneux, I am giving this letter a strictly limited distribution, for the record, with copies going only to John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Sir Robin Butler.**

*yours ever,  
Roderic*

**RODERIC LYNE**

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Northern Ireland Office