



Handwritten: PPS/Donnell
12 December 1993

10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Principal Private Secretary

13 December 1993

JOINT DECLARATION INITIATIVE

I have seen Quentin Thomas's note of today to you, and you may like to consult

I agree that we should not break on "as of right". Conceding its reservation

We spoke about the Financial Times claim that they have been told by "a good source" that your Secretary of State offered to resign after the errors in the dossier of messages came to light.

The Prime Minister's view is that we should if at all possible avoid substantive comment on this. If the story runs, it will inevitably raise all sorts of awkward issues, partly those concerning Ministerial resignations generally and partly those specific to Northern Ireland - especially in a week when we may see a Parliamentary Statement on a Joint Declaration.

Gus O'Donnell will not, therefore, be making any substantive comment if he is asked again about this issue. But if the story does run anyway, the Prime Minister has agreed that the attached line should be used.

(Incidentally, at the end of paragraph 11 of the NIO note "security" should, I assume, read "clarity" and at the end of paragraph 13 "political right" should read "legal right".)

ALEX ALLAN

Tactics with the Taoiseach

There are only two real difficult points outstanding, as I see it. One is the sentence discussed above. The other is the Irish bid for restoration of and the alternative of a reference to the "forum" at the end of the alternative paragraph 10. We could trade the latter for the former

Jonathan Stephens Esq
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