

From: CONFIDENTIAL  
THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

1. PUS to see  
2. File J.D.



cc: PS/SJS (L+B)  
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PS/Michael Ancram (L+B)  
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PUS/  
25 JUL 1994  
NIO 22 July 1994

Mr MacCabe  
Ms Siberry  
Mr Beaton  
Floats

Dear Rod,

SINN FEIN: RESPONSE TO JOINT DECLARATION

After nearly eight months Sinn Fein is expected to make public its response to the Joint Declaration this Sunday following a special delegate conference to be held, we believe, in Donegal. Reports as to the nature of that response - and any parallel moves by the IRA - are contradictory. But the thrust of the latest reports - both press and intelligence - suggest that the most likely outcome will be less than definitive, although it may include recognition of positive aspects in the Declaration as a basis for further political progress in the "peace process".

The likelihood of some form of immediate IRA ceasefire to accompany this is being widely discounted. In a statement published on 21 July (Annex A) the IRA's Army Council extended "solidarity greetings to the forthcoming Sinn Fein delegate conference" and went on to praise Sinn Fein's efforts in advancing the cause of a 'just and lasting peace in Ireland'. They said that the IRA had a vested interest in securing peace and that to date it had adopted a 'positive and flexible attitude' to developments in the peace process. The statement said this remained their position and reasserted their commitment to Republican objectives, including 'the right to national self-determination'.

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Although there are no clear indications of any likely course of action it may be worth noting that the IRA's 'flexibility' in the past has included their calling of a three-day ceasefire at Easter, and that with its expected praise for Sinn Fein the new statement recognises the 'effort of others in this regard' (ie in the creation of a viable peace process). The 'others' in this context are probably the Irish Government and John Hume, but the British Government is not specifically excluded. But sophisticated exegesis of this text is probably inappropriate. Its likely purpose is to signal the IRA's support for whatever decision is taken at Sunday's meeting. We know that the spectre of a split between those favouring a political turn and the militarists haunts Provisional leaders (who are themselves the product of an earlier such split) and they set much store in crablike progress to maintain unity. This does not exclude taking political and tactical advantage from distinguishing between the different wings of the Republican movement.

It may be useful to report also the views of Martin Mansergh on what is likely to happen. Mansergh, in London on 21 July as part of the Irish team meeting Sir John Chilcot on Articles 2 and 3, said he believed that there was unlikely to be anything more on the military front on Sunday. In other words, the Army Council's statement would be all we got for some while (perhaps until September), and it was not clear whether the conference would produce a single decision or whether Sinn Fein's views would emerge in a series of speeches. He said that the Irish Government did not, however, believe that this was an end to the matter, and that it was important for us to avoid a rebarbative reaction to whatever did emerge. He made it clear that the Irish Government was saying, through many different channels, that

only a definitive and permanent break with violence would be good enough to trigger involvement in the political process, including in their proposed Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, or the granting of a visa for the USA. The Tanaiste has repeated this in public this morning. The Taoiseach would "draw his own conclusions" if nothing more was forthcoming from the Provisionals by September.

Even so, it would be foolhardy to attempt to predict exactly what will happen on Sunday, but we do have contingency planning in hand to deal with a number of possible scenarios ranging from an unequivocal, permanent end to violence through various partial and conditional renunciations and ceasefires to outright rejection of the Declaration and rededication to the armed struggle. Since one guess is that we may yet see an attempt to build on the distinction between Sinn Fein and the IRA, allied to a ploy designed to place us in the position of developing or frustrating the peace process further, we judge that our initial response should be resolute but should not obviously slam the door in their face. The most important thing for the weekend will be to ensure that, in so far as it needs to respond at all, the Government's tone is clear, measured and judicious and that all Ministers have a common script from which to work.

I attach a draft statement at Annex B as a quarry for use on Sunday if something is needed. This includes some alternative words which will enable us to turn the flame up or down depending upon the precise nature of Sinn Fein's announcement.

A copy of this letter goes to John Sawers and Melanie Leech.

Yours,

Jonathan

JONATHAN STEPHENS