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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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Mr THOMAS

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25 January 1994

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26 JAN 1994
N.I.O. LONDON

Dear Roderic,

NORTHERN IRELAND MEETING ON 26 JANUARY

Thank you for your letter of 24 January giving me notice of questions which the Prime Minister might well want to explore at tomorrow morning's meeting.

You have since seen my Secretary of State's own paper which answers many of them, at least in general terms. This brings out clearly:

- the merits of our current policy of seeking, in close collaboration with the Irish, to keep up the pressure on the Provisionals by ensuring that the Joint Declaration is properly understood as a balanced and fair document offering much to Nationalists (and Republicans) as well as to Unionists, with a view also to ensuring that the blame will fall exclusively on them if they reject their historic opportunity;
- the need to ensure, in parallel, that we put pressure on both the Irish and the Unionists to prosecute more intensively with us the Talks process;

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- the grave dangers inherent in allowing our frustrations, whether at PIRA prevarication and terrorism or the current Irish preoccupation with 'peace' rather than with Talks, knocking us off course.

More generally, it brings out why anything which calls in question our commitment to the principles of the Joint Declaration, or stimulates suspicions that we were going for a 'internal solution', or could in any other way lead to a rift between ourselves and the Irish would be to discard our strongest card against the Republicans, wreck hopes of achieving a negotiated settlement for the foreseeable future, and damage us internationally.

In the light of this analysis I turn to the questions in your letter.

Irish reaction to a rejection?

- The Irish do not appear to have seriously considered the next steps, whether or not a positive response has been received. But the Taoiseach has hinted at tougher security measures, and his officials report that he could be 'vengeful' if the Provisionals rebuff him.
- Politically, the Taoiseach can most effectively wrong foot the Provisionals by co-operating, imaginatively and constructively both in the Talks process and in security co-operation. That is why both the Prime Minister and my own Secretary of State have been seeking not only to consolidate our common front, against all eventualities, but also to draw Irish attention to the fact that the Declaration is a platform for talks just as much as a call for peace.

- The basic constitutional and political realities enshrined in the Declaration remain valid whatever the Provisionals do.

Maximising support for the Joint Declaration?

- We should continue to promote the Joint Declaration, vigorously, as a balanced and fair document on the lines sketched above, and as my Secretary of State has recently been doing. This entails ensuring that the Declaration is properly understood and that we are not accused of jeopardising 'peace' through our 'inflexibility'. (Incidentally, Martin Mansergh telephoned Sir John Chilcot this afternoon to pass on the comment that the Taoiseach found the Secretary of State's two speeches last week very helpful and he called for more of the same).
- This will also keep the pressure on the Provisionals, especially if reinforced by further Ministerial speeches (and articles), including those drawing attention to favourable Nationalist comments on the Agreement. So too will unrelenting, hard hitting PR stressing that PIRA terrorism hits the working class, hits jobs, endangers children and achieves nothing.
- Maximising political activity and intensifying the political process without Sinn Fein, will also make it clear that they are isolated. (This of course requires Irish co-operation).

- Support for the Declaration, especially amongst Unionists, is fragile. Even in the Republic only 52% of voters support the Joint Declaration 'without clarification'. A poll or referendum might well reveal a disconcerting lack of public support as well as being too 'gimmicky'.
- The Churches, and Cardinal Daly in particular, have been as helpful as they could be. But we should not overestimate the ability of the Churches to influence the more wayward members of their flocks (or those outside it). There is little sign that say the Cardinal (or Fr Faul) have had any real impact on the Provisionals, despite their wholehearted condemnation of violence.
- Greater activity in the community relations area would require more resources - with uncertain results. We shall continue, however, to do our utmost to bring Churches and community groups together to promote programmes for mutual understanding, but without trying to assimilate or compromise the different identities.

Reward those who have accepted the Joint Declaration?

- Benefits for those who have accepted (or acquiesced in) the Joint Declaration should include the chance of making progress to a comprehensive political settlement. (Which is an incentive for the UUP to commit themselves wholeheartedly to talk on a three stranded basis). To give any hint now that we had abandoned the three stranded analysis or our wider strategy would lose all hope of Irish/SDLP co-operation and, with it, the best chance of rewarding those we might wish to reward.

- Proceeding unilaterally with a 'Strand 1' solution would cut the ground from under constitutional Nationalists and probably increase support for the Provisionals.

Further action with Dublin

- Also my Secretary of State's paper deals, directly and indirectly, with our approach to Dublin, including at next Friday's IGC. If despite his best endeavours, we still cannot make progress either with our security agenda or the Taoiseach remains fixated on the peace process after this has become politically intolerable for us, then the Prime Minister may have an important role in taking things forward. A Summit cannot be excluded.

Winning hearts and minds in North America

- US wavering on Mr Adams' visa is tedious. But we have strong allies in the State Department and FBI. The White House, moreover, knows the arguments and our concerns.
- We shall continue to target intensively individual opinion formers in the US, and be prepared to spend a great deal of time and effort talking to the individuals, developing our relations with them and generally keeping in touch. Once again, however, being seen to be at one with the Irish is our strongest card across the Atlantic.
- The Prime Minister can reinforce our messages when he visits Washington next month.

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It is arguable that we are now on the critical path to peace and on historic political accommodation. It is simply a question of how long it will take. We must not allow the Provisionals to dictate our agenda. The biggest weapon we have is to get on with 'business as usual'.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

NORTHERN IRELAND MEETING ON 26 JANUARY

You will receive the letter today a paper to provide background for this week's ministerial meeting. May I give you advance notice of some questions which the Prime Minister would like to explore at the meeting?

for JONATHAN STEPHENS

In this, as in other areas, the Prime Minister believes that we should do whatever we can to consolidate the broad coalition which has supported the Joint Declaration, and to try thereby to sustain support and sympathy for the Provisionals in the interim period. He would like us to think creatively about specific ways in which we might drive wedges into the position of the Provisionals. It would be helpful if the ministerial meeting could consider ideas for the next phase of political action by us after a rejection of the Joint Declaration (whether announced or merely evident de facto), over and above intensification of the talks process. For example, would we be able to offer some demonstrable benefits to those who had accepted the Joint Declaration? How can we capitalise on the wide public support for it? What else do you have of John Hume's idea of holding some form of poll or referendum on the JD? If this would be too risky or too quickly, what else might we do instead? How can we maximise church support? Is there scope for further activity in the community relations area?

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