



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*Pl. return quater to
had
4-18.12*

From the Private Secretary

16 December 1993

Prime Minister

Dear Mark,

*Though it is familiar to you,
you may wish to be aware
of the line I put round to
your colleagues at lunchtime today.
I cleared it with NIO.*

NORTHERN IRELAND: BRIEFING LINES

*Rodriguez
16/12*

In Cabinet this morning it was decided that an updated line of briefing on Northern Ireland should be circulated today to Cabinet Ministers.

I enclose appropriate notes which have been agreed between No.10 and the Northern Ireland Office. I would be grateful if the recipients of this letter could ensure that the material is distributed to all Ministers in their Departments. The NIO will answer any questions on the briefing or requests for additional information.

In addition to the general lines to be taken in public comment, I enclose short extracts from statements made in support of the Joint Declaration. These can be used freely in conjunction with yesterday's exchanges in the House of Commons, as reported in Hansard. The NIO will circulate a fuller list of supportive statements, which they shall then update as appropriate.

The key point on which we wish to focus attention is whether the Provisionals will take this opportunity to give up violence for good and enter the democratic process. Ministers should stress that they will never have a better opportunity. Given the fair treatment which the Joint Declaration assures for those in Northern Ireland who hold nationalist aspirations, the endorsement of the Irish Government, and the support of John Hume and other leading public figures, the Provisionals must realise that they would have no excuse, no justification and no future in continuing their policy of violence. Were they to do so, they would receive no sympathy from all those who see the Joint Declaration as a fair and balanced document.

Copies of this letter go to the Private Secretaries to all Cabinet Ministers and to Juliet Wheldon (Law Officers Department), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

The Joint Declaration set out a clear challenge to the Provisionals. This is that they should demonstrate for good, and show that they have done so. The way would then be open for them to enter the political arena as a democratic party under the law.

yours ever,

Roderic Lyne

RODERIC LYNE

The Joint Declaration has had strong and wide support from the House of Commons, Church and Community leaders, and from people across the United Kingdom.

It is now up to the Provisionals to decide. They will never have a better opportunity to opt for a peaceful future. They would have no excuse, no justification, no sympathy, and no future if they chose to continue violence.

Mark Ormerod Esq
Lord Chancellor's Office

All those who are sympathetic to the nationalist tradition should urge them to take the democratic path, and help to build a better life for all the people of Northern Ireland.

The Joint Declaration explicitly protects the democratic rights also of the unionists. It does not weaken or undermine the union.

It reaffirms the Government's constitutional guarantee that the status of Northern Ireland will not be changed without the consent of the majority of its people.

It takes no steps in the direction of joint jurisdiction of the British and Irish governments over Northern Ireland. The claims which