



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

14 December 1993

From the Private Secretary

Dear Mark,

**NORTHERN IRELAND: JOINT DECLARATION INITIATIVE
WITH THE IRISH GOVERNMENT**

The contents of this letter and its enclosure must be reserved for Cabinet Ministers only and held within their Private Offices until the Joint Declaration with the Irish Government has been published, probably on 15 December.

The Prime Minister has asked me to write to the Private Secretaries of all Cabinet Ministers about the visit to London on 15 December of the Irish Prime Minister. This visit follows the developments which the Prime Minister and the Northern Ireland Secretary reported to Cabinet last week.

The Joint Declaration results from exchanges which have taken place between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach since Albert Reynolds assumed his present post. The aim of the two Prime Ministers was to try to bring their two Governments closer together in establishing a basis which might encourage a permanent cessation of violence in Northern Ireland; or which, failing that, would undermine support for PIRA by exposing the organisation's intransigence in using violence to pursue aims which should properly be pursued by legitimate, democratic means.

During the course of the past few months, in particular, the two Prime Ministers have intensified their work on a text designed to encapsulate the positions of both Governments. The work was carried forward at meetings in Brussels on 29 October, Dublin on 3 December, and in Brussels again on 10 December. The meeting at Downing Street on the morning of 15 December will be the fourth of this series. The Prime Minister hopes to be able to issue

the enclosed text with the Taoiseach at the end of that meeting (though we cannot be certain until the meeting takes place, and last-minute adjustments are possible). He would then make a Parliamentary Statement tomorrow afternoon.

When the Joint Declaration is launched, the Government will be seeking to develop the widest possible support for it, and the Prime Minister wishes to ensure that Ministers are fully briefed and take a consistent line. We and the Northern Ireland Office will therefore circulate additional briefing material on 15 December; and the Northern Ireland Office will answer any questions on it. In the meantime there are a number of important points relating to the Joint Declaration of which Cabinet Ministers will wish to be aware:

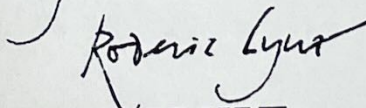
- We and the Irish Government naturally hope that PIRA will respond to the Joint Declaration by abandoning its campaign of violence, and that the Loyalist paramilitaries will choose to do likewise. The Government has already made clear that we would be prepared to enter into a purely exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein within three months of a permanent cessation of violence being established and clearly demonstrated. This is a statement which the Prime Minister is likely to repeat on 15 December. However, we do not know whether PIRA will respond. The Joint Declaration is the result only of negotiations between the British and Irish Governments. There have of course been no negotiations on it with PIRA.
- The Joint Declaration does not change the Government's policy towards Northern Ireland. The principles on which that policy is based - including the constitutional guarantee and consent principle - are explicitly protected in the document. There is no commitment by the Government to seek to persuade the people of Northern Ireland to endorse the value or the concept of a united Ireland: it does not tilt the Government towards a policy of "persuasion". Nor does it endorse the idea of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole. It states that self-determination is to be exercised by agreement between the two parts respectively, and "on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish".
- The Joint Declaration represents an important advance in terms of the policy of the Irish Government. For example, it includes (in paragraph 5) recognition by the Taoiseach that "**it would be wrong**

to attempt to impose a United Ireland in the absence of the freely given consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland".

The Joint Declaration is separate from the Talks process which has been under way in Northern Ireland since 1991, most recently through the bilateral meetings held this Autumn by Mr Michael Ancram. However, it explicitly acknowledges the Talks process (in paragraph 12). We and the Irish Government see the two processes as complementary. A central issue in the Talks process has been reform of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. The Joint Declaration includes a conditional commitment to Constitutional reform, in the context of an overall settlement, which is more forward and specific than previous commitments made by the Irish Government in formal texts.

Whatever claims may be made for the paternity of this document, it is demonstrably distinct from the Hume/Adams dialogue. In their Brussels Joint Statement of 29 October, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach said that there could be no question of adopting or endorsing the outcome of the Hume/Adams dialogue; and that it was for the governments to take the initiative. The Joint Declaration reflects ideas exchanged between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach since the time of their first meeting. While we do not have a precise account of the proposals shared by Hume and Adams, there are clearly wide differences between their prescription and that of the two Governments. The process of negotiation has injected language and proposals from the British side, while inevitably amending or removing much of the starting position of the Irish Government.

I am sending copies of this letter and its enclosure to the Private Secretaries to Members of the Cabinet, to the Private Secretary to the Attorney General and to Sir Robin Butler.

yours truly,

RODERIC LYNE

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Lord Chancellor's Office