PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

SUBJECT MASTER

Filed on:

Prime Minister

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

Highlights.

From the Private Secretary

RM/L

17 January 1994

I hope he ought — it would be a boon

Dear Jonathan,

NORTHERN IRELAND: CONVERSATION WITH MARTIN MANSERGH

Martin Mansergh telephoned on the evening of 17 January at the request of the Taoiseach, who had been in touch with him from Mexico. Mansergh had clearly received a number of "vibes" from the Sinn Fein direction over the past few days. His advice was that we should remain reasonably optimistic, despite the tenor of Sinn Fein's public statements (including today's PR stunt at Westminster, of which he was sharply critical). He said that the Provisionals had narrowed their decision down to a few issues. One possibility was that they would accept the Joint Declaration before their process of consultation had finished; and that subsequent internal consultation would be designed to explain the decision to the membership. Mansergh had checked out stories circulating among certain journalists that a decision to reject the Joint Declaration had already been taken by the PAC. He had been told in terms that no such decision had been taken.

Mansergh said that on 19 January the Taoiseach would be making a speech about self-determination. This would not cause us any difficulties. It would be based on recent research by Mansergh in the library at Cambridge into experience in other partitioned territories. The conclusion would reinforce the notion of "concurrent self-determination".

At the Taoiseach's request, Mansergh asked if we could continue to stress two points in particular, including in your Secretary of State's speech in the Parliamentary Debate this Friday.

The first was to repeat our existing explanation (from the 5 November message) of the scope of the exploratory dialogue.

The second point was to stress our objective of bringing the talks process back in due course to a round-table format, designed to achieve a comprehensive agreement on all three strands. The purpose of this was to counteract deep suspicion on the Provisional side that the Unionists would spin out the talks process indefinitely, so that three or four years from now no real progress would have been made, despite a renunciation of violence and the entry of Sinn Fein. The Irish had argued that this was a misreading, and that the dynamics of the process would be bound to lead to forward movement after an end to violence. Mansergh thought it would be sufficient for us to reiterate points we had made before (ie that we hoped that the bilateral exchanges of the past few months would lead back to a wider process) and language which was already in the Joint Declaration.

Commenting on the statement issued this week by Gerry Adams, Mansergh pointed out that Adams had left himself open to clear evidence that the IRA had changed their position on the consent principle. They had complained about passages in the Joint Declaration which were more or less identical to language in the fifth paragraph of the "June document".

Request by Adams to visit the United States.

I said that it was crucial for our two Governments to continue to stand shoulder to shoulder. A number of attempts had been made to drive wedges between us in the month since the Joint Declaration was launched. They had had little success.

However, I was concerned that we had now adopted opposing positions on the visa application by Adams to go to the United States. I said that there was every reason to encourage Adams to think that he would be able to travel once the Joint Declaration had been accepted; but we could not see the logic of arguing that he should be let in now. Nothing had changed since the previous American decision to deny him a visa. A reversal of the American position would be interpreted by some as a sign of sympathy for the position - so far an unsatisfactory position - adopted by Adams over the Joint Declaration. Whatever the administration decided, differences between our two Governments would be exposed. This was unfortunate.

Mansergh replied with a lot of blather and flannel, showing himself also to be on the defensive about the broadcasting ban. He tried to claim, variously, that the admission of Adams would build up his confidence, and help him to accept the Joint Declaration; that Adams would face a critical audience at his New York meeting; and that there was a parallel with the release of IRA

prisoners on parole over Christmas. I did not accept any of these arguments, and stressed the importance of consultation and coordination between us.

I am sending copies of this letter to Jonathan Smith (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Roderic

RODERIC LYNE

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Northern Ireland Office