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From the Private Secretary

24 January 1994

Dear Jonathan

NORTHERN IRELAND MEETING ON 26 JANUARY

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

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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 diminish support and sympathy for the Provisionals in the months ahead. 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 examine 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 view 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 gimmicky, 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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Looking towards Dublin, the Prime Minister would like to consider, as I have indicated above, further action with the Irish Government, after this week's IGC. When should he next speak to or meet the Taoiseach? Can we put together a joint plan of action with him?

A third area to consider is North America. There are differing views on whether or not we are winning the PR battle there. The agonising in the White House about Gerry Adams' visa application certainly suggests that we are not having it all our way. What more could we do to bring home to the Americans and Canadians that the Provisionals will have spurned a very fair offer if they turn down the JD? How might we campaign to undermine their support in North America?

It would be most helpful if you were able to pull together some thoughts into a draft action plan for the Wednesday meeting. It could be set out as a series of sub-heads and annotations: we do not need a long piece of prose. It should not be confined to the areas I have mentioned above, and would obviously include reference to the possibility of enhanced security measures. It could then serve as a companion piece to your policy paper.

I am copying this letter to John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Nick Macpherson (HM Treasury), Joan MacNaughton (Home Office), John Pitt-Brooke (Ministry of Defence) and Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely



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