

SECRET AND PERSONAL

FILE PLJ/Stephens.KK

S(a-e)



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

26 January 1994

Dear Jonathan,

**MINISTERIAL MEETING ON NORTHERN IRELAND,
26 JANUARY**

I enclose a list of action points agreed at the meeting the Prime Minister chaired this morning on Northern Ireland. A record of the discussion will follow.

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 ever,

Philippa

MS PHILIPPA LESLIE-JONES

Jonathan Stephens, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

MINISTERIAL MEETING ON NORTHERN IRELAND, 26 JANUARY

ACTION POINTS

Broad Strategy

The Strategy proposed by the Northern Ireland Secretary in paragraphs 14-16 of his note of 24 January was endorsed.

Selling the Joint Declaration

It was agreed that:

- the Northern Ireland Secretary should put to Dick Spring at the 28 January IGC:
 - the possibility that the Irish government challenge Sinn Fein to specify what they mean by clarification of the Joint Declaration;
 - the possibility that the Irish government (preferably Spring himself) make a positive statement on the talks process.
 - we should work up proposals for a joint Irish/UK Government presentation on the Declaration in the US.

Action: NIO to prepare briefing, consulting as necessary;

- in the fairly near future the Foreign Secretary or Prime Minister should make a speech reiterating the case for the Joint Declaration in similar terms to those used by the Northern Ireland Secretary on 20-21 January, including setting out the next stage of the talks process, and preparing the ground for the position that the Joint Declaration will remain on the table, even if at this stage the IRA do not accept it.

Action: NIO to coordinate with FCO and No 10 on first draft for circulation by 1 February: NIO to investigate possibility of speaking opportunities in the diaries of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and to make a recommendation on who should make the speech;

- the Northern Ireland Secretary should alert John Hume to the position we will be taking publicly, and try to persuade him to be more helpful over Sinn Fein's demands for clarification, if possible by saying publicly what he has said in private to the effect that Adams is actually seeking re-negotiation not clarification.
Action: NIO to prepare line to take with Hume.

Talks Process

It was agreed that:

- the Northern Ireland Secretary should explore with Dick Spring at the IGC on 28 January the importance of making rapid progress in the talks process, possibly to be highlighted in the speech by the Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary.
Action: NIO to prepare draft;
- we should be ready to set out our own proposals in the event that the talks fail.
Action: NIO to update White Paper for publication if appropriate. NIO to consider at what stage we discuss our contingency plans with the Irish government, and make a recommendation.

Security

It was agreed that:

- we should seek to enhance cross-border cooperation on security with the Irish Government;
- we should also review possible changes in the law, and possibilities for enhancing security measures on the lines set out in the Northern Ireland Secretary's minute ("The Way Forward"), and the NIO paper on 29 December;
- these matters should be considered separately at a later stage.
Action: NIO to provide further advice following the IGC if necessary.

Adams' visa

It was agreed that:

- we should keep up efforts with the Americans, but;
- we should urgently draw up a contingency line to take in the event of a US decision to grant Adams a visa.
Action: PS No.10 to carry forward in consultation with the FCO, NIO and H.M. Ambassador in Washington.

IRA attack

It was agreed that:

- we should prepare a contingency press line and contingency

Parliamentary statement to use in the event of an IRA attack.

Action: NIO to circulate drafts by 1200 on 28 January.

Informal meeting with the Taoiseach

It was agreed that:

- we should consider arranging an informal meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach when he comes here for the 19 February rugby match.

Action: PS No.10 to draft a message to the Taoiseach proposing an informal meeting.

PHILIPPA LESLIE-JONES

26 January 1994

plj\draft.pmg

SECRET AND PERSONAL



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

4/4 - d/ COPY
SUBJECT
MASTER

Filed on:

From the Private Secretary

26 January 1994

Dear Jonathan,

MINISTERIAL MEETING ON NORTHERN IRELAND, 26 JANUARY

The Prime Minister chaired a meeting of Ministers on 26 January to discuss policy on Northern Ireland. The Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Michael Ancram MP, Sir Robin Butler, Sir John Chilcot, and Quentin Thomas were present.

The Northern Ireland Secretary described the broad strategy set out in his minute "The Way Forward" of 24 January. He stressed that our strongest weapon against the Provisionals was our alliance with the Irish government.

Joint Declaration

The Prime Minister said that the Joint Declaration had secured wide public support. But, unless we were careful, Sinn Fein's repeated calls for clarification could lead it to fray at the edges, and American support might also diminish. Unionist pressure for action and tighter security measures would build up. We needed to find a way of keeping the initiative. We should also be clear about what we would do in the event of an IRA rejection of the Joint Declaration, or an IRA outrage, which could amount to the same thing.

The meeting discussed how we should counter Sinn Fein's calls for clarification. It was agreed that any attempt to offer clarification would go back on the earlier Government position, and alarm Unionists. If Sinn Fein had really wanted clarification, they would have asked for it privately. Our main aim should be to keep the Joint Declaration intact and ensure that HMG and the Irish government remained firmly at one over it. We should put pressure on Sinn Fein. The Irish government might challenge Sinn Fein, who had not been able to specify what points needed clarification.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

It was agreed that we should reiterate HMG's position on the Declaration as set out in the Northern Ireland Secretary's speeches of 20 and 21 January. It could be made clear that the Joint Declaration remained on the table. It was agreed that we should aim for a joint Irish/British presentation of the Declaration in the US, to help keep the Americans on side.

Mr. Ancram said that, in discussion with him on 24 January, John Hume had accepted that Adams was actually seeking re-negotiation, not clarification. The Prime Minister wondered whether he might be persuaded to say this publicly.

Summing up the discussion, the Prime Minister said that the Northern Ireland Secretary should pursue with Dick Spring at the IGC on 28 January the possibility of an Irish approach to Sinn Fein over clarification, and the idea of a joint presentation in the US. We should aim to keep the Joint Declaration in the forefront of people's mind by a further speech which he or the Foreign Secretary might make in similar terms to those used by the Northern Ireland Secretary on 20-21 January.

Talks process

The Prime Minister said that we should in any event press ahead with the talks process. Mr. Ancram said he believed that all three parties were prepared to sign up in principle to intensified and more focused talks (although the Unionists were unsure, and wanted an assurance that if they did sign up, the talks would make progress). None of the three wanted to move yet to a round table format. Mr. Ancram was therefore working on a "shaded structure" of general areas within the three strands where progress might be made. These might then be pursued by bilaterals between the three parties, the UK and the Irish government. The format could be explored with the Irish government.

The Prime Minister said that we should not be held up by the prevarications of each side in turn. We must be ready with UK proposals if we were unable to relaunch formal talks. The Northern Ireland Secretary had suggested that we should be ready to publish our proposals by Easter at the latest.

The Northern Ireland Secretary said that there should be some flexibility on timing. We had told the Irish Government in September what the joint framework paper, which would be the basis for the three strands, would look like. They would not be taken by surprise. He outlined the ideas in Strand One. These could be worked up and published in a White Paper which was

? and proposals for strands II and III

already on the stocks. Mr. Ancram said that we should give no indication at this stage of our fall-back position because the Unionists would exploit it. We would then risk losing the SDLP and the Irish Government at a stage when we wanted them on board for the talks.

Summing up, the Prime Minister said that Strand One should be fleshed out in case the talks broke down. It might not carry Irish Government support. But we should be prepared to publish our ideas. We should avoid a long hiatus if the talks broke down.

we should reiterate our commitment to do these stranded talks.

Contingency planning

There was some discussion of contingency planning with the Irish Government in the event of a rejection of the Joint Declaration. It was agreed that the Northern Ireland Secretary should pursue his proposals on enhancing cross-border cooperation on security with the Irish Government, and review measures within Northern Ireland, including possible changes to the law, on the lines set out in his minute and the NIO paper of 29 December. These matters should be considered separately at a later stage.

The possibility that the Irish Government might call for a referendum north and south of the border if the IRA rejected the declaration was discussed. There was no support for this idea. The presentational benefit would be relatively small. Both extremes in the North would seek to exploit a referendum.

Adams' visa

An American decision was imminent. The Americans were thinking of making a conditional offer, and we were arguing strongly for stringent terms. It was agreed that we should keep up our pressure. At the same time, we should prepare a public line, in consultation with H.M. Ambassador in Washington, to use in the event of a US decision to grant Adams a visa.

IRA attack

The Prime Minister said that the risk of a spectacular IRA outrage could not be ruled out. We should consider how we should react. It was agreed that a possible public response covering the Joint Declaration, the talks and security should be prepared.

Talks with the Irish Government

The Irish Prime Minister would be coming to the UK for the rugby match on 19 February. The Northern Ireland Secretary had also invited Dick Spring. He thought we should take the opportunity to touch base with the Irish informally. It was agreed that we should explore the possibility of an informal meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach.

The Foreign Secretary mentioned that Dick Spring had invited him to talks in Dublin on the future of Europe on 21 February. That would be an opportunity to go over the ground.

I have already circulated a list of action points arising from the meeting.

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 ever,
Philippa*

MS PHILIPPA LESLIE-JONES

Jonathan Stephens, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

file



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

*- in agreement
with agreement
was the only
part. put in*

Ms Philippa Leslie-Jones
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street

*W.P. will also
with strands of this process*

*F. notes which
was being*

27 January 1994

*collected at the
meeting, not planning to say at the
end. I am in*

Dear Philippa,

MINISTERIAL MEETING ON NORTHERN IRELAND, 26 JANUARY

Thank you very much for your letter of 26 January, recording Wednesday's Ministerial discussion. If I may say so, I thought it generally provided a very accurate account of a helpful and wide-ranging meeting.

There was only one point over which I hesitated: the discussion and conclusion on the talks process on pages 2 and 3. As it stands, the note could be read to mean that, if the Government were to publish proposals of its own, they would be on Strand I only. I had thought the sense of the meeting was that we should remain committed to a three-stranded approach. There are significant difficulties in proceeding on Strand I alone - as the Foreign Secretary observed, in practice we could not establish an assembly which only the unionists would attend. I recorded the Prime Minister as summing up to the effect that we should reiterate our commitment to three stranded talks.

I am sorry to raise this, but it is an important point. I attach a draft showing how I suggest the relevant section might read. But of course they are your minutes and I leave the final wording to you.



I am rather assuming that the best way of dealing with this would be if you were to issue an amended version of your note; but, if you prefer, I could put in a formal note recording our understanding of this part of the discussion.

My apologies for raising this, but I don't see any way round it.

Yours,

Jonathan

JONATHAN STEPHENS

SCANNED
Revision

SUGGESTED REVISION

(Amendments underlined)

The Prime Minister said that we should not be held up by the prevarications of each side in turn. We must be ready with UK proposals if we were unable to re-launch formal talks. The Northern Ireland Secretary had suggested that we should be ready to publish our proposals by Easter at the latest. It was noted that the need for widespread support in Northern Ireland, and the SDLP's insistence on an Irish dimension, meant that the Government could not necessarily then impose its proposals. But they might provide an incentive for the parties to return to talks.

The Northern Ireland Secretary said that there should be some flexibility on timing. We had told the Irish Government in September what the joint framework paper, which would be the basis for the three strands, would look like. They would not be taken by surprise. He outlined the ideas in Strand I. Along with proposals for Strands II and III, these could be published in a White Paper which was already on the stocks. Michael Ancram said that we should give no indication at this stage of our fall-back position because the unionists would exploit it. We would then risk losing the SDLP and the Irish Government at a stage when we wanted them on board for the talks.

Summing up, the Prime Minister said that we should reiterate our commitment to three stranded talks. We should be prepared to publish our ideas in case the talks broke down, so as to avoid a long hiatus.



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

7
R6
UB

From the Assistant Private Secretary

28 January 1994

Dear Jonathan,

MINISTERIAL MEETING ON NORTHERN IRELAND, 26 JANUARY

My letter of 26 January recorded the Ministerial meeting on Northern Ireland.

In case it was not clear from that record, in discussion of the talks process it was agreed that any proposals published in the White Paper would cover Strands II and III as well as Strand I. For reasons which were fully accepted at the meeting, we are not planning to proceed on Strand I alone. The Prime Minister said that we should reiterate our commitment to three-stranded talks.

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

*Yrs ever,
Philippa*

MS PHILIPPA LESLIE-JONES

Jonathan Stephens, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.