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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
WHITEHALL  
LONDON SW1A 2AZPrime MinisterRoderic Lyne Esq CMG  
Private Secretary to the  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London*The last sentence  
is entirely right. 22 April 1994**Run.  
Yes. Absolutely 24.4.*✓  
Dear Rod,

We discussed yesterday the lines on clarification. You asked for some more detailed advice on how we might deal with questioning on this topic.

Our view is that we should not overstate the difficulty we are in. Although the experience of last year and our contacts with the Provisionals naturally comes to mind, the present situation is very different from that. Then we were anxious to safeguard a necessary secret, premature disclosure of which could have jeopardised lives and what might have been a genuine opportunity to secure peace. In present circumstances the emphasis is on openness and there is nothing in the Provisionals' text itself which would be damaging to us if it became public. Our difficulty in dealing with it, however, stems from the basis upon which we have seen the document.

As I said in my letter of 20 April, the Irish Government passed it to us on an informal basis, in direct breach of the conditions set out by the Provisionals in the text.

✓  
Yesterday, Sean O hUiginn reiterated to Quentin Thomas that there was no question of the Irish Government acknowledging publicly, or privately to the Provisionals, that it has been passed to us. Although the fact that it has been passed to us is awkward, the Irish were trying to help the process

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rather than to embarrass us, and we would certainly damage our relations with them - and the welcome degree of cooperation both over the peace process and through work in the Liaison Group on taking forward political talks - if we were to expose the fact that we have had the full text from them. If we could not protect confidential exchanges between Governments of this sort we might suffer on several fronts.

But there is clearly some risk of exposure. Although the Irish are unlikely deliberately to reveal that we have seen the document, its existence could become apparent through one of a number of channels, with or without a reference to it having been passed to us. If it simply became public, our response would, as our public lines state, depend on the circumstances; but if it also become clear that we had earlier been given a copy, then we might well have to acknowledge that the Irish had showed it to us informally and on a basis requiring that confidence to be respected.

In the meantime I attach a revised set of lines consistent with this approach. These seek to take account of the comments which Philippa passed to me earlier.

We have considered whether, in response to a question about our knowledge through indirect means of what Sinn Fein might want clarified, one might say: "Different people have said what they think Sinn Fein claims is in need of clarification. But Sinn Fein have not put specific points to the Government." This is factually correct, but my

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Secretary of State prefers that such a direct question, if asked, should be met with "I have nothing to add to what has already been said", as reflected in the attached lines. That avoids any risks if knowledge of what the Irish have passed us subsequently becomes public. Sir Patrick thinks we should not be drawn into further circumlocutions.

A copy goes to John Sawers and Melanie Leech.

Yours,

Jonathan

JONATHAN STEPHENS

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CLARIFICATION

It is for the IRA and Sinn Fein now to explain what possible justification there can be for wicked and murderous acts, such as that which killed Constable Pollock and injured Constables Carroll and McKnight in Londonderry last week. There can be no justification for any violence, whether Republican or Loyalist.

The Downing Street Declaration is very clear. Both Governments have made determined efforts to ensure it is fully understood. There will be no talks or negotiations with Sinn Fein until IRA violence has been brought to a permanent end.

Would you respond if Sinn Fein say what they want clarified?

We are not afraid of explaining what is in the Declaration and what is not, as we have already done. But we will not be drawn into talks or negotiations until IRA violence has been brought to a permanent end.

As my RHF has said, if there were genuine questions we would look to see if they had already been dealt with. Then we would consider our course of action in the light of all the circumstances.

Have you received a request for clarification from Sinn Fein?

For all their talk about clarification Sinn Fein have not told us what it is they claim needs clarifying - and it is now four months since the Declaration was signed and made public. When pressed in public they have not specified what they want clarified.

If there are genuine questions, let them be stated in public. Then everyone will know, ourselves included, at first hand what Sinn Fein are claiming. My RHF has made clear how we would react.

While Sinn Fein refuse to say in public what it is they claim needs clarifying, the inevitable conclusion is that they want to blur the vital distinction between politics and violence by drawing the Government into negotiations without a permanent end to IRA violence.

But are you aware by any means of what are the questions Sinn Fein want clarified?

I have nothing to add to what has already been said, nor to what my RHF said in the US last week.

Adams' Letters to the Prime Minister?

Sinn Fein have told you what was in those letters and I have published our replies.

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