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From the Private Secretary

9 February 1994

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LNI-5M

NORTHERN IRELAND UPDATE

The Prime Minister found your letter of 4 February and its enclosure particularly useful. I am sorry that Bosnia, temporarily displacing Northern Ireland at the head of our agenda, has delayed this reply.

The Prime Minister agrees that there may be a case for a bilateral Summit in March, so long as it produces results of genuine substance (to be recorded in the communiqué). This will be easier to judge after the 19 February meeting with the Taoiseach and perhaps the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis. What will not be remotely easy is scooping a half day out of the Prime Minister's diary for a visit to Dublin.

The Prime Minister agrees that our commitment to a settlement across all three strands (last page of your letter) remains unchanged, and that we are not going for an internal settlement. However, he has commented that, on the other hand, we cannot let others veto internal progress. We may have a difficult decision to take at a later stage.

Action Plan

The Prime Minister has endorsed your Action Plan. Arrangements are now being made for his meeting with the Taoiseach. He is pleased that your Secretary of State was able to send the Tanaiste a joint framework document last week, and that another round of meetings to deploy "notions" is in train. He supports the proposal for a "Diner" which might usefully prepare the ground for his meeting with the Taoiseach. On the summit, see above.

The Prime Minister agrees that we should make vigorous efforts to put our point of view across in the USA. Would it be worth making a further attempt (possibly on 19 February) to persuade the Tanaiste to join in a joint

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ministerial presentation there at an appropriate time? While Ireland is bound to come up during the Prime Minister's visits to Washington and New York on 28 February-1 March, he does not agree that our current information campaign should centre around this visit. To do so could invite a recrudescence of last week's stories about a split with the Administration over Ireland. It would also destroy the wider purposes of the Prime Minister's visit.

With regard to further ministerial speeches, the Prime Minister (diary, as always, permitting) remains interested in the possibility of making a speech on Northern Ireland himself. I believe that some work on a possible draft is in hand in your Office.

The Prime Minister knows that the timing of a possible White Paper will be a matter for fine judgement. He is keen to sustain momentum in the talks process. He would not want the White Paper to fade into the middle distance while the pace slackened.

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

RODERIC LYNE

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Northern Ireland Office

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