

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
10 13 DEC 1993
SIL DIVISION

FROM: A WOOD
DIRECTOR, INFORMATION SERVICE
10 DECEMBER 1993

DESK IMMEDIATE

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
- PS/Michael Ancram (L) - B
- PS/PUS (L) - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Deverell - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Cooke - B
- Mr Rickard - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Beeton - B
- HMA Dublin - B
- Mr Archer, RID, FCO - B
- Mr Templeton
- Mr Woods
- Mr Millar
- Mr McCaffrey
- Miss Jude - B
- Mr Reid - B

Mr Bell - B

Following our VCR session, we propose the following outline handling plan for next week. It assumes a Tuesday (late afternoon/early evening) press conference in London at which the two Prime Ministers will present the joint declaration.

As we see it, there are four main sequences in the 24+ hours following the press conference. Each is outlined below, together with a suggested way of handling.

Our whole approach is predicated on several factors. These are:

1. The need to provide a strong Ministerial presence in Northern Ireland to address the one audience which matters above all others. This should be a continuing exercise - not a "parachute drop" covering only one or two days.

2. The need to ensure that our message and presence is sustained over several days and that we are resourced so to do.
3. The desirability of talking as directly and as often to people as opposed to pundits (though some cross examination by them will be a constituent of the scene).

The four Tuesday-Wednesday sequences are:

a. **Launch of Joint Initiative in London**

Media dimension/handling considerations

Will play itself and stand alone. Statements and Q and A sessions will give evening bulletins plenty of material. Short interviews for bulletins by Prime Minister(?). NIO officials to stand ready to brief leader writers for GB morning papers.

Secretary of State to travel to Belfast post Press Conference to brief Editors/leader writers of the Belfast papers. Mr Ancram to be alongside. Possibility of special programmes on BBC NI and UTV - SoS to take part.

b. Early morning radio and TV (0630 - 0900 Wednesday)

We take a break: the briefing baton has been passed to our "friendlies" (Tom King, Michael Mates, Peter Bottomley) who make themselves available for interviews. Aim: to take on the wilful misinterpretations which will be being put about by Paisley and Robinson and to cut into the inevitable triumphalist sounds from the Irish.

c. Wednesday morning

We are now going for our third bite. The Prime Minister travels to Northern Ireland: he meets RUC and R Irish

representatives and then makes a speech (media admitted) to an invited audience in Belfast (Harbour Commissioner's Office?). There will be disapproval and dissent from some of the audience - no bad thing - it can lift his game. It also sends the messages (a) that he is concerned to talk to the people of Northern Ireland and (b) is unafraid of honest questioning.

Mr Fell, with whom we have discussed this idea, supports it - attendant risks notwithstanding.

To be preceded/followed by a brief walkabout?

d. Wednesday afternoon

Prime Minister and SoS return to London for Commons statement. ?SoS to address Tory NI Backbench Committee. To be followed by radio/TV interviews (SoS) as merited.

By now we should have an idea of the overall reception in terms of opinion: what may still remain to be seen is the reception in terms of action on the streets. Premium will be on stimulating calming influences - church and community leaders.

This concludes the immediate sequence.

Thursday and Friday should see us continuing our efforts, sometimes less publicly.

We need to think about briefing for the Government representatives on:

"Question Time" (BBC TV Thursday)

"Any Questions" (BBC Radio Friday)

and

"Spotlight" and "Counterpoint" (BBC NI and UTV respectively Thursday)

as well as earmarking Ministers for weekend radio and TV.

On the print media front, perhaps SoS/PUS would consider a Friday briefing session for the GB Sunday political correspondents? To be agreed in consultation with Downing Street who also meet the Sunday Lobby that day.

Permed in with all this media activity will be attempts at influencing NI's "great and good" - it almost goes without saying that the name of this game is to increase the number of 'friendlies' to whom the media can turn and who we, in turn, can pray in aid and quote and re-quote.

A technical point: we will provide a sound feed of the London press conference into the Stormont Castle conference room. Mr Fell may wish to consider inviting his Permanent Secretary colleagues and other senior officials to this. (It will, quite possibly, be complemented by live BBC/UTV coverage.)

A planning point: we really must have the earliest notification of a fixed start point. Although we have been working so far on a 'Tuesday' assumption, Gus O'Donnell has just told me (1610) that his betting is for a Wednesday meeting. We will recast our proposals if/when that becomes a certainty.

(signed)

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