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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

S 302 /95

From the Private Secretary

5 December 1995

Dear Martin,

**PRIME MINISTER'S VISITS TO NORTHERN IRELAND
AND THE REPUBLIC, 21/22 DECEMBER**

For security reasons, I would be grateful if this letter is distributed on a very strict need to know basis. The dates and arrangements for the Prime Minister's trip must be held as closely as possible, although I shall need to concert a press announcement with the Irish Government much nearer the time. (I would be grateful for your advice on presentation of the Northern Ireland leg.)

This is to confirm the outline arrangements which I have discussed with you, John Chilcot, Veronica Sutherland and Paddy Teahon.

We have agreed that the Prime Minister will pay a pre-Christmas visit to Northern Ireland on Thursday, 21 December. He would land at Aldergrove at about 1030, and would need to take off for Dublin at about 1600. I understand that John Chilcot is working up some ideas for the programme between those two points.

Mrs Major will unfortunately not be able to accompany the Prime Minister on the Northern Ireland leg of the trip, as she has an unbreakable commitment to a charity here. I therefore expect the Prime Minister to be accompanied only by me, Christopher Meyer, one Garden Room lady, one Duty Clerk, probably three Protection Officers, and possibly Christopher Meyer's PA.

In Dublin, Paddy Teahon is working on a programme which would start with a short round of official talks in the Government Offices at 1700. The Tanaiste and the coalition leader, de Rossa, would attend this meeting. One theme of the meeting might be to launch the programme of East/West contacts which Paul Lever has developed with his Irish counterpart. Paul Lever may

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wish to join the party for that meeting. I would be grateful if he could now do whatever is necessary to refine the initiative and agree on its final shape with Irish officials.

Following the official talks, the Taoiseach is planning an informal meeting with a family flavour. Mrs Major will have flown to Dublin to join the Prime Minister. Paddy Teahon is looking into the possibility of going to a musical event or a play, perhaps to be followed by supper at the Taoiseach's home. A possible alternative would be to have a meal out at a restaurant. In addition to the Prime Minister and Mrs Major, I think the Irish intend to invite Veronica Sutherland, Christopher Meyer and me to join the evening's festivities.

Veronica Sutherland has kindly agreed to put the Majors and some of the entourage up overnight. We shall return to London early on Friday, 22 December.

Briefing and Public Statements

For Northern Ireland, you will wish to work up background briefing (including an update on the twin-track initiative and on security aspects) and lines for the Prime Minister's use in public.

For the Dublin talks, grateful if NIO could provide a brief on Northern Ireland and twin-track; and the FCO (liaising with Paul Lever) briefing on UK/Irish relations, including repatriation of prisoners, Irish steel, President Robinson's visit, and the East/West initiative.

Briefing should reach me by 1600 on Tuesday 19 December please.

I am copying this letter by fax to Veronica Sutherland in Dublin. Copies also go to William Ehrman (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Paul Lever and Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever
Roderic

RODERIC LYNE

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Northern Ireland Office

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