

S E C R E T A N D P E R S O N A L

FROM: Q J THOMAS
 DUS(L)
 11 NOVEMBER 1993

Copy no ¹³ . . . of [13]

cc. Michael Ancram	[2]
PS/PUS(L)	[3]
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Mr Cooke	[5]
Mr Rickard	[6]
Mr C Glyn-Jones	[7]
Mr Beeton	[8]
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PS/Sir Robin Butler	[10]
Mr John Sawyers, FCO	[11]
Mr Roderic Lyne	[12]
File	[13]

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE
 MR STEPHENS [1]

MEETING OF BUTLER/NALLY GROUP: 10 NOVEMBER 1993

I attach a copy of the note of the meeting that Sir Robin Butler held on 10 November with Dermot Nally and Mr Sean O hUiggin.

2. As the note records in more detail, the Taoiseach remains personally highly committed to the Joint Declaration Initiative (JDI). This is likely to colour the Irish side's approach to the Talks and any conclusive rejection of the JDI will lead to foot-dragging or worse on the talks process.

3. The new text (JD13) produced by the Irish side incorporates substantial amendments drafted, we were told, by Archbishop Eames. He is reported to be an enthusiastic supporter of the initiative and to believe that it could carry the Unionist community generally and the Unionist political establishment in particular. The Taoiseach accepts this judgement. The British side is urged to test the matter directly.

4. In discussion with the Secretary of State after the meeting he indicated that he would seek an early meeting with Archbishop Eames to test his opinion of the text, and to clarify how far he had reason to believe Unionist politicians would go along with it. Another option must be to test it on Mr Molyneaux. (Another idea is that we should escape from our self-imposed

denial of "textual barter" on the Joint Declaration by side-stepping it and offering the Irish side a British draft of the Joint Statement to issue from the Heads of Government meeting on 3 December. If the Irish Government chose to consult others about this that would be for them.)

5. The Irish side will wait on some further response from the British side. They are clearly signalling concern about the prospects for the forthcoming Heads of Government meeting if the JDI is not brought to fruition. At least one strand of Irish official advice appears to point to an apocalyptic scenario with some version of the Joint Declaration being published and a great alliance of the Irish Government, the US Administration, Mr Hume (and Adams) and the Primates denouncing the British Government's intransigence. (That scenario would only begin to work if the Provisionals were ready to endorse publicly a reasonable text, which must be open to doubt.)

6. If it is possible to make progress on the JDI all doors, we are told, will swing sweetly open. If not Anglo-Irish relations in general and the talks process in particular are headed for the buffers.

Martin Mansergh's Views

7. It may be helpful to report Mr Mansergh's views. HMA Dublin had lunch with him yesterday and in some ways his perspective is different from that conveyed by Nally/O hUiggin. It is he who manages the link, through intermediaries, with the Provisionals; and as the Taoiseach's Political Adviser he is also influential in determining Irish Government policy.

8. Mr Mansergh reported that the Taoiseach is determined to smoke out PIRA. He believes this is a political and moral necessity and that it needs to be done before we can expect serious progress on the talks. But that would not matter because the talks are on a longer timescale and PIRA would either be smoked out or not in a matter of weeks.

9. On Mr Mansergh's account the textual additions in JD13 were drafted by him in the light of the Taoiseach's exchanges with Archbishop Eames and the Reverend Dunlop. (Nally of course reported that Eames himself had written them.) Mansergh confirmed that Eames was fully on board.

10. Mr Mansergh said that what was sought from us at this stage was a general blessing for the text as a basis for detailed discussion between the two sides. If the two Governments were more or less agreed the Irish plan was to approach the Provisionals through two prongs. First they would attempt to recruit Hume to the latest text and invite him to test it on PIRA. (So much for decoupling the JDI from Hume/Adams!) Second the Irish side would test it on PIRA through their own clerical link. PIRA would be given a deadline. They would either indicate acceptance or not and would thus be smoked out. If they bought the text then there would be peace. If not the Irish Government would attempt to ensure that Hume joined them in condemning PIRA.

11. Mr Mansergh confirmed that the Provisionals had the earlier text (this could be JD8 or JD11) had not given a clear response. Mr Mansergh speculated that there were three issues in the latest text which might give them difficulty:

- (a) the absence of a time limit for British withdrawal;
- (b) the consent formula; and
- (c) the fact that the language did not amount to HMG joining the ranks of the persuaders.

Comment

12. The Ambassador's account is of considerable interest for a number of reasons. First Mr Mansergh seems much less ready to embrace an apocalyptic scenario. He is much readier to convey an impression of genuine doubt about the Provisionals' intentions and to present the nature of the exercise as being less to deliver peace than to establish whether or not it is really being offered. The fact that there is uncertainty on the three points

mentioned above underlines that there must be real doubts on this score. It also suggests that if "Hume/Adams" is published in any version which the Provisionals approve they might quickly lose any public relations gains they have achieved from their association with Hume over the last few months. By the same token the Taoiseach and Hume, who have suggested that peace is readily available, would be made to look foolish.

13. I spoke on the phone to Mr O hUiggin today in preparation for the phone call Mr Spring wishes to make to the Secretary of State this evening. Mr Spring will, I believe, underline what was said yesterday: a great opportunity which both Governments should grasp imaginatively, taking risks if necessary.

14. In the conversation I gained a clear view of the linkage the Taoiseach is making between the Joint Declaration Initiative and Talks. They believe HMG's hesitation over the Joint Declaration Initiative is because Northern Ireland policy is subject to a Molyneaux filter. This is their working hypothesis. If this prevents HMG making the slight tilt necessary to secure the Joint Declaration Initiative then it would also prevent a successful outcome to the Talks. This is because the same filter would preclude HMG making the necessary moves (eg in terms of constitutional balance) to "reconcile the nationalists to British rule" which, in the Irish view, is the basis for an accommodation in the Talks. Therefore, the argument goes, Talks are better avoided if Molyneaux holds sway. (I made clear that I was not accepting this hypothesis; and Mr O hUiggin made it clear he was not asking me to.)

Signed:

Q J THOMAS

DUS(L)

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