

MR. ALLAN

1. cc Michael Ancram
Mr Thomas
Mr Deverell
Mr Cooke
Mr Rickard
Mr May
Mr Glyn-Jones

JOINT DECLARATION

2. PUS to see

I went to Dublin today to deliver the Prime Minister's message to the Taoiseach about the Joint Declaration. Only the Taoiseach and the Tanaiste were present: there was no notetaker, although the Tanaiste made a series of notes until towards the end of the meeting when he had to depart for a visit to Scandinavia.

I first delivered the Prime Minister's manuscript letter. The Taoiseach read it and declared his disappointment at its contents. He said that he had had a number of indications, including from Unionists (he mentioned particularly Archbishop Eames) that they were ready for an initiative to be taken for peace. He then invited me to set our thinking.

I said that there was no difference between the British government and the Irish Government about wanting to take advantage of any opportunity in the present situation for a cessation of PIRA violence. That would be a great prize. The question was over the route. British Ministers had considered the Joint Declaration very carefully. Our intelligence confirmed that the Provisionals were serious about contemplating a cessation of violence. But we also had to consider the effect of the Joint Declaration on the Unionists. The revelation of the Hume/Adams dialogue, and in particular Hume's demarche of 25 September, had created an intensely suspicious atmosphere among the

SECRET AND PERSONAL

- 2 -

Unionists. The concept of the "pan-nationalist front" had entered the Unionists' demonology. The Prime Minister had sought to reassure the Unionists by an unequivocal statement of the British Government's position in his Conservative Party Conference speech. But our assessment was a Joint Declaration by the two Governments in the form proposed, even if it was reinforced by an unequivocal statement of the British Government's constitutional guarantee in the fourth paragraph, would be regarded by the Unionists as something cooked up between the two Governments and strongly influenced by Hume/Adams. The tone and language of the draft, which had been designed to take the trick with the Provisionals, would inflame that suspicion. In this atmosphere, reaction was unlikely to be influenced by a careful reading of the text. A very strong adverse reaction was to be expected, in which our assessment was that the activities of the men of violence among the Loyalists would be intensified, targeting individual Catholics. The Provisionals, whatever the sincerity of their original intentions, might then be drawn back into sectarian violence to defend their own people. Given this prospect, British Ministers had concluded that a statement on the lines proposed was not a route which they could responsibly adopt. This did not mean, however, that we had lost interest in encouraging the Provisionals to give up violence, and we would want to continue the dialogue with the Irish Government on the means of doing so.

I then showed the Taoiseach and the Tanaiste our intelligence assessments about the interest of the Provisionals in the Joint Declaration and the prospective reaction among the Unionists. The Taoiseach commented that he thought we were wrong to suppose that the Provisionals were war weary. They could go on for a long time yet. He had heard through Irish Government channels a

SECRET AND PERSONAL

SECRET AND PERSONAL

- 3 -

month ago that the Provisionals' assessment was that the British Government's response to the Joint Declaration would be negative. In these circumstances, he believed that those advocating a cessation of violence among the Provisionals would ^{be} lost out, the campaign would be continued with increased ferocity and an historic opportunity would have been lost. Whatever the perceptions, the Joint Declaration did not come from the Hume/Adams dialogue: he had mentioned to the Prime Minister within a fortnight of taking office his desire to make an effort to secure peace. While the Irish Government had regarded the Hume statement of 25 September as very unhelpful, they had tried to give the British Government a breathing space: however, the situation could not be held beyond his meeting with the Prime Minister on 29 September. Our assessment of Unionist reaction was inconsistent with the impression which he had gained from Archbishop Eames and others. He thought aloud about trying the present draft of the Joint Declaration on Archbishop Eames in confidence and obtaining his assessment.

I said that, whatever the Provisionals might have been expecting about the attitude of the British Government, we had worked on the Declaration in good faith and our conclusion about its likely effect on the Unionists had only been reached on the previous day. As regards Unionist views of the provenance of the statement, we and the Irish might know about the Taoiseach's part in it, but this would not dispel public association of it with Hume/Adams. As regards the next steps, the Prime Minister had wanted the Taoiseach to have the British Government's conclusions about the Joint Declaration route as soon as possible: we had not reached a conclusion about alternative ways forward, and there

SECRET AND PERSONAL

would be opportunities for this to be discussed between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Tanaiste on 27 October, and between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach on 29 October. In the mean time, I assumed that neither Government would want to give Mr. Hume any indication of the point which discussions had reached. The Taoiseach assented to this but pointed out that the Provisionals would have to know that the Joint Declaration had been rejected and repeated that he did not expect to be able to hold the situation longer than his meeting with the Prime Minister next Friday.

Assessment

Although the Taoiseach was clearly disappointed, the conversation was friendly throughout and my references to the difficulties caused by the Hume demarche appeared to strike a chord, particularly with the Tanaiste. The Taoiseach still clearly hopes to persuade us that we have been too pessimistic about the reaction of the Unionists, and I did not discourage his suggestion that he might himself obtain in confidence the reaction of Archbishop Eames to the present text (although I said that I would pass a message through if those in London wanted to give him different advice). Both the Tanaiste and he will want to discuss the way forward at the meetings on 27 and 29 October and, in addition to supporting the conclusion we have reached, we will need to have some positive suggestions to make if we are to head off the Irish Government from seeking to revive the Joint Declaration or blaming us for the failure of the initiative. We agreed that the public line in the meantime would be that the Irish Government were

/ continuing to consider

SECRET AND PERSONAL

- 5 -

continuing to consider the way forward and, in particular, that nothing should be said to John Hume. The name of Mr. Molyneux was not mentioned at any point and I was not pressed on whether we had taken soundings from the Unionists.

I am copying this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Northern Ireland Secretary and to Mr. Chilcot (Northern Ireland Office) and Sir Timothy Daunt (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

R.R.B.

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

20 October 1993

ferb.slh

SECRET AND PERSONAL