

SECRET AND PERSONAL



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From the Private Secretary

30 November 1993

Dear Jonathan

cc PS/SofS (B)
PS/Michael Ancram (L+B)
PS/P/S (L) *1/12*
PS/Mr Fell *1/2*
Mr Thomas
Mr Beverell
Mr Williams
Mr Cooke
Mr MacCabe
Mr Beeton.

**MEETING WITH MR JAMES MOLYNEAUX MP:
JOINT DECLARATION**

I attended a meeting in the Northern Ireland Office on 30 November between Mr Michael Ancram MP and Mr James Molyneux MP. This lasted for the better part of two hours.

Distribution of this letter must be restricted on a tight need-to-know basis.

We had before us the texts of the British draft joint statement (as discussed by your Secretary of State and Mr Molyneux last week) and JD14, with manuscript amendments (copy enclosed). Although Mr Molyneux had said last week that he could not continue with discussions on the Joint Declaration, he was more than ready to do so today, in the light of his meetings last night with the Prime Minister and with Mr Ancram.

We went through JD14 paragraph by paragraph, using the British draft as a point of reference and quarry for alternative language. The upshot was as follows (the letters refer to the points indicated in the text).

- (A) Molyneux felt that the last sentence of paragraph 2 could be tricky for Unionists. He asked if we could bring it closer to the concept of the 3-stranded talks.
- (B) For the first sentence of paragraph 4, Molyneux preferred the formula in paragraph 2(b)(i) of the British "constitutional issues" text. This means that after "no selfish, strategic or economic interest" one would insert "that would lead it to seek to retain Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom against the wishes of the greater number of its people".

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- (C) Molyneux thought that the formula "encourage, assist and enable such agreement" had overtones of HMG joining the persuaders. He jibbed particularly at "assist". He thought that Mr Ancram's suggested insertion (enable "the process of reaching") would meet his problem.
- (D) Molyneux would prefer the deletion of "independent". "Independent structures" sounded too close to the all-Irish bodies mentioned in the leaked Irish paper.
- (E) Molyneux was uncomfortable with the phrase "the people of the island of Ireland alone". This sounded as if the British wanted to cut themselves off from Northern Ireland and wash their hands of the problem. He provisionally accepted an offer by Mr Ancram to re-draft the two sentences from "The British Government agree" to "concurrent North/South consent" in order to incorporate the same points in a different order. If the constitutional guarantee came first, the reference to the people of the island alone would lose its negative impact.
- (F) Insert "new" before political system, as in the British text.
- (G) Molyneux did not consider the second and fourth sentences of paragraph 6 to be essential. They had been put in to allay the fears of the North. He was content for us to treat these two sentences as negotiating fat. He said magnanimously that it was not for people in the North to dictate the conditions of life in the South, or be the cause of internal tensions there. (Comment: a more suspicious mind than mine might suspect that Molyneux did not wish the South to make their offer too attractive!)
- (H) More surprisingly perhaps, Molyneux applied a similar argument to the sentence in paragraph 7 which points towards Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. He said that he would not mind if this sentence was dropped. We should certainly not regard it as a high card, for which significant concessions should be made elsewhere in the text. He expressed nervousness about being drawn down the slippery slope towards Irish unity if concessions were made to match the amendment or withdrawal of Articles 2 and 3. We said that the need to amend Articles 2 and 3 was such an integral part of our approach that we could not envisage dropping the sentence. But we took the point about not paying an excessive price for it. (Comment: he gave me the impression that Articles 2 and 3 were rather comforting, as they stood as a manifest barrier to progress - but perhaps I am being too cynical.)

- (I) On grounds similar to (D) above, Molyneaux wanted to replace "seek to create institutions ..." by "work through the talks process to create institutions...".

Mr Molyneaux confirmed that he would want paragraphs 10 and 11 (the Convention) to be deleted. He passed no comment on the alternative wording suggested in paragraph 10, which embodies a timeframe for the entry by Sinn Fein into exploratory dialogue after a cessation of violence. However, he conceded that he had been relieved by the provisions revealed in our secret exchanges with PIRA. His fear had been that we would be likely to try to parachute Sinn Fein straight into the talks process, after a short interval. Our proposal of an intermediate stage of exploratory dialogue, or talks about talks, was better.

Mr Ancram asked if a text on the lines we had discussed would meet the "non-expostulation" test. Mr Molyneaux confirmed that it would. Publication of a text like this would certainly lead to a fuss and doubtless much misinterpretation on the Loyalist/Unionist side. But he would not have to oppose it. He judged that it would gain acceptance if it secured the objective of leading to a cessation of violence or, even, the secondary objective of isolating and undermining the PIRA/Sinn Fein.

By agreement, Mr Molyneaux took copies of both texts away with him.

We made clear to Mr Molyneaux that the JD text was likely to form the basis of discussion with the Irish Government at the Dublin summit, probably on 3 December. Before going into that meeting, the Prime Minister had wanted to be sure of Mr Molyneaux's views. We now had them. We would, of course, wish to continue to keep in close touch with him.

Comment

Mr Molyneaux was still in relaxed form, and showed no particular signs of nerves about the document. He has a clear understanding of the likely sequence of events. We must obviously keep him posted carefully so that there are no surprises.

The deletion of paragraphs 10 and 11 is a sticking point for Mr Molyneaux. So, I assume, is explicit inclusion of the consent principle. Next in order of importance for him would appear to be the qualification of the references in paragraphs 4 and 9 to institutions and structures. He said explicitly that amendment (B) was not a deal-breaker. Though we did not put

the question specifically, I suspect that the same may apply to (A), probably (B) and (C).

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

*Yours truly,
Roderic*

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Northern Ireland Office

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