

SECRET AND PERSONAL



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From the Private Secretary

29 November 1993

cc PS/SofS(B)
PS/Michael Ancram(L)

DM
20/11 PS/PUS(L)
Mr Thomas
Mr Beveral

Mr Cooke
Mr Maccabe
Mr Rickard
Mr Beeton

Dear Jonathan,

**PRIME MINISTER'S TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH THE
TAOISEACH, MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER**

Following the letter received from the Taoiseach in mid-afternoon and his meeting this evening with your Secretary of State, the Home Secretary, and officials, the Prime Minister spoke to the Taoiseach by telephone for nearly 40 minutes.

No further copies should be made of this letter, and it should be made available only to other Ministers and officials with a strict need to know of its contents.

The Taoiseach at first resisted the idea of agreeing to hold the Summit on 3 December with no certainty that it would produce results. As ever, he maintained that the only way forward lay through his Joint Declaration. He was less confident than hitherto that it would bring about a cessation of violence by PIRA; but he continued to argue (this time quoting an intermediary in touch with Loyalist paramilitaries) that his document would not provoke a Unionist backlash.

Although the Taoiseach seemed not averse to postponement, he was clearly worried at the thought that the process might break down completely. The Prime Minister took him through a range of options. He sought repeatedly to reject the British draft for a Joint Statement (this "did not have a hope in hell", as it showed no feeling for the right language). He perked up when the Prime Minister tentatively floated the possibility of including a three month fire-break in a revised version of the Joint Declaration, from which the Irish Convention would be dropped.

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By the end of the conversation, the following position had been reached:

- The Taoiseach would propose to the Irish Cabinet on 30 November that the Summit should go ahead on Friday 3 December. He would then be in touch again. (The Prime Minister hopes that we shall be able to announce the date tomorrow afternoon.)
- Officials should meet on Wednesday and possibly Thursday, perhaps in London, to prepare the Summit.
- The Prime Minister, having set aside the whole day for the Summit, was ready for a long discussion. He and the Taoiseach would examine each other's positions and would themselves see where progress could be made. The outcome to the meeting would not be pre-determined. It might end up as a long working meeting, after which both participants might simply say that they had agreed to go on working together. But three possible forms of written conclusion were discussed: an amended version of the Joint Declaration (though the Prime Minister doubted whether we could finalise this on Friday); a document based on the British draft statement (the Taoiseach all but ruled this out, but the Prime Minister did not explicitly concede the point); or parallel statements.
- Of these options, an amended Joint Declaration was discussed at most length. The Taoiseach said that he could dispense with the Irish Convention proposal [i.e. paragraphs 9 and 10], if the Prime Minister could specify instead a three month interval from cessation of violence to exploratory talks. The Prime Minister said he would be prepared to put this proposal forward, if the Taoiseach could tell him that the IRA would give up violence for good. Otherwise, there was no point in taking the risk.
- At the Taoiseach's request, the Prime Minister would go over the ground with Mr James Molyneaux. The Taoiseach acknowledged the importance of securing Mr Molyneaux's agreement and of keeping consultation with him entirely private.

Further Action

As I am recording separately, the Prime Minister saw Mr Molyneaux later, and Mr Ancram will follow up on 30 November.

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When we have word from Dublin after the Cabinet meeting, we should be able to move ahead with our announcement; with plans for a preparatory meeting between officials (grateful if the NIO could liaise with Sir Robin Butler and with Irish counterparts over this); and with administrative arrangements for the Summit (FCO to lead).

I am sending copies of this letter to Joan MacNaughton (Home Office), John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), John Pitt-Brooke (Ministry of Defence), Jeremy Heywood (HM Treasury) and Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,
Roderic*

RODERIC LYNE

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Northern Ireland Office