

SECRET AND PERSONAL



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10 December 1993

From the Private Secretary

Don Jonathan

**JOINT DECLARATION: PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING
WITH THE TAOISEACH, PALAIS D'EGMONT, 10 DECEMBER**

The Prime Minister met the Taoiseach for an hour on the afternoon of Friday 10 December in the British Delegation office. Dr. Martin Mansergh and I were present.

The Taoiseach said that his overriding objective was to secure the correct balance in the Joint Declaration. However, particularly as a result of the line which I had taken in negotiation with Mansergh and others during the morning, the balance was being tilted in the wrong direction. He did not agree that we were just tidying up the text. The Taoiseach said that he might be able to agree to the omission of the Irish Convention from the text, but only if there was the right balance overall. Kather McGee and others who had seen the earlier text (presumably, JD14) and had found no problems with it. If we removed the Convention, the only part of the text which would appeal to the Nationalists would be paragraph 4. We would be leaving nothing in other areas. We were objecting to elements which reflected the Anglo/Irish Agreement. We were even seeking to change suggestions that we ourselves had put forward.

The Prime Minister described the difficult political environment. Ian Paisley was succeeding in stirring up trouble. The Northern Ireland Conservative Party had organised a petition, and was writing to Party Chairmen around the country. James Molyneaux was running into trouble with even his middle-class supporters. Publicity about the Irish Convention, such as the Geraldine Kennedy article in the Irish Times of 9 December, had caused concern. There was also concern among senior politicians at Westminster.

The Prime Minister said that we were now close to a conclusion in the negotiations on the text. It should be possible to reach agreement over the weekend. He wondered from the Taoiseach's remarks whether he really wanted to go ahead with it.

The Taoiseach said that a text on the present lines would not secure the right response. He acknowledged that the DUP and some UUP MPs were hostile. On the other hand, Cecil

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Walker had given a helpful radio interview; and according to Father McGee the Loyalist paramilitaries were not taking their cue from Paisley and Robinson.

The Prime Minister said it was not surprising that we had had to seek a number of changes to the text, because it had started life as an Irish draft. However, he felt that we would probably be able to reach agreement. The Taoiseach said that John Hume had complained to him about deficiencies in the text. The Prime Minister said that Hume would scarcely be able to oppose a text which had been agreed by the two Prime Ministers.

The conversation then turned to presentation of an agreement. After some discussion, it was agreed very tentatively that perhaps the best arrangement might be to hold the third meeting in London early on the morning of Wednesday 15 December, with a mid-morning press conference. The Taoiseach should then return to Dublin, and he and the Prime Minister would make parallel statements in the two Parliaments on Wednesday afternoon.

It was agreed that both Governments should make every effort to organise rapid support for the Joint Declaration, especially from the churches, when it was launched.

The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister agreed on a minimalist press line, designed to avoid raising expectations. Both sides would stick closely to this, and would not reveal details unattributably.

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

Roderic Lyne
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