

SPEAKING NOTE FOR PHONE CALL TO TAOISEACH

1. Thank you for your letter.
2. I quite agree that we must not be blown off course. We have a common objective - peace and a lasting political settlement - and we had made much progress towards it before events of the last two or three weeks.
3. Our strongest asset is that we are working together and being seen to work together. Essential to preserve this. Without it, we shall not make real progress. Indeed, if we fell apart in public, we could set the process back many years. Neither of us would want to do that.
4. I don't want to take up time in this phone call discussing what has gone wrong recently, though we are virtually certain that Willie McCrea got his document from someone in the IRA, and we think we know why. [Internal divisions in the IRA.] We obviously have differing interpretations of these things, but what is important is to concentrate on moving forward.
5. The key difference between us is not what we want, but what is viable for both sides. My judgement, based on all of our advice and contacts, is that your joint declaration would be a step too far, at this time at least, for the Unionists. They are very edgy and this weekend's revelations has made them even edgier. Paisley has now broken ranks completely. If the joint declaration tipped the official Unionists over on to his side, we would not have peace or progress, but the probability of even bigger trouble than we have now. That is a judgement for which, in the last resort, I have to take responsibility.

6. I think we should instead try to move by slightly smaller steps towards the same objective - giving the Unionists time to adjust rather than any excuse to cry "sell out".

7. We also have to make clear to the IRA that Hume/Adams - whatever it may be precisely - is not on offer. At the moment, they are internally divided but also shopping around for the best offer. They haven't yet accepted the message of our Brussels statement. That, I think, is why some of them leaked our exchanges to McCrea. It would be fatal to our joint efforts if the IRA thought they had room to negotiate. It must be take it or leave it.

8. This is the thinking behind our version of the joint statement. The language is deliberately less ambitious than yours, ^{but only a little} but it captures many of the same points.

9. Time is now running short, but expectations are high. No doubt they are high on your side of the water. Not to hold the Summit this Friday would rebound against both of us, and therefore against the overall process.

10. So I propose the following:

- after your Cabinet meeting tomorrow, we should compare notes quickly and aim to announce in the afternoon that we will be meeting on Friday. I could perhaps do this at Question Time;
- we should have our officials meet on Wednesday - and if necessary again on Thursday. Perhaps the Butler/Nally group or some other suitable format;

they should look at three options:

(a) a slimmed-down version of your text. You may prefer not to do this, but to keep your full text in reserve in case it will fly at a later date. Or you may feel that an amended version would still be seen as a step in the right direction;

(b) our text. I was concerned that this weekend's events might make even that a step too far, but I am prepared to give it a try;

(c) alternatively, if the first two are ruled out, an outcome which would explicitly be an interim step. We could have a short joint paragraph recording our commitment to go on working urgently together, towards an end to violence and participation by all in a political process. This could then be accompanied by short national statements of position.

11. Whichever variant we end up with, I am sure that it would be valuable for us to meet, and to use the time to explore the way ahead very thoroughly and bring our positions and our analysis closer together.

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