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IMMEDIATE

FROM: D A L COOKE
SIL/TPU
22 OCTOBER 1993

- cc PS/Michael Ancram (L,B&DENI) - B
- PS/PUS (L&B) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Dodds - B
- Mrs Collins - B
- Mr Quinn - B
- Mr Rickard - B
- Mr Beeton - B
- Ms Lodge - B
- Mr Caine - B
- HMA Dublin - B
- Mr Archer, RID - B

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B) - B

LIAISON GROUP: DUBLIN: 21 OCTOBER

Summary

Going through the motions. Irish side neither table their own draft framework document, nor discuss ours further, since they lack political instructions.

2. The British side was Thomas, Bell, Williams, Watkins, Dew and Cooke. The Irish side was O hUiginn, O'Donovan, Donoghue, Montgomery and Corr.

The joint framework document

3. Mr O hUiginn proffered abject apologies. The Irish side

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had prepared a document (which he said followed our own draft fairly closely up to paragraph 11, and then parted company with it completely) but did not have Ministerial authority to table or discuss it. This was because the Tanaiste was wholly distracted at the moment by the crisis over EC payments, where Monsieur Delore was disputing a deal claimed to have been struck with him by Mr Spring following the Edinburgh Summit.

4. It appeared to be true that the Irish side had prepared a paper. Reading upside down, it looked to me as though they had a draft dated 18 October.

5. Mr O hUiginn said that the Irish side would try, EC payments crisis permitting, to get their paper to us before the Conference. If it would help, we could have a discussion in the Liaison Group on 26 October.

6. Mr Thomas said the handling of the IGC would be easier if we had had an Irish draft. If not, we would look ragged.

7. The meeting then left this topic, Mr O hUiginn confirming that the Irish side did not wish even to have further discussions there and then of points arising from the British draft. The meeting then worked through a make-weight agenda.

Leaks

8. Both sides expressed concern about recent apparent references to the work of the Liaison Group in pieces in the Irish Times by Mr Frank Millar. The Irish side were assured, but did not seem reassured, that these did not reflect briefing by members of the British side.

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Bodenstown

9. Mr Thomas welcomed a number of the elements in the Taoiseach's recent Bodenstown speech, including its rejection of violence; commitment to the Talks process; endorsement of the principle of Northern Ireland consent; recognition of the position of the Unionist parties; greater sense of pluralism; and rejection of secret deals. Mr O hUiginn was glad this had been noticed, and pointed out that these features were all the more significant in a speech to a party, and parti pris, audience.

Ancram Round

10. At the Irish side's request, the British side confirmed the most recent contacts within the Ancram Round, but did not offer any detailed briefing on substance. The Irish side asked whether there would be a written encapsulation of the Ancram Round. Mr Thomas said there were no fixed commitments on this. If, for instance, multilateral talks were reconvened, and the British Government tabled a document to give focus to them, then this would certainly be informed by contacts during the Ancram Round. But there was no need to limit options at this stage.

Westminster

11. The meeting then touched briefly on the Prime Minister's reply on 19 October to Dr Paisley, and on the impending Northern Ireland Questions and Adjournment Debate. Mr O'Donovan commented that the Prime Minister was like the Delphic Oracle: the Unionists seemed pleased no matter what he said.

The IGC

12. The meeting briefly revisited the discussion which had taken place within the Secretariat the previous day on planning

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for the IGC on 27 October. Mr O hUiginn doubted whether the Minister of Justice would be happy with the format of the previous Conference, and thought she would prefer to revert to the original format of a tete-a-tete, which she attended, followed by the restricted session, followed by the plenary session. He thought that she was likely to want to attend any discussion in tete-a-tete of Hume/Adams. The two sides noted the possibility that any such tete-a-tete discussion could be expanded by the addition of one or two officials on each side.

13. On Hume/Adams, Mr Thomas said it would be desirable to avoid any suggestion that the Irish Government had made a report to the British Government. Any such discussion might better be subsequently explained as: taking stock; considering the implications of the Hume/Adams démarche of 25 September and the reaction to it; reviewing the relationship with the security situation; and renewal of the commitment of the two Governments to the Talks process.

14. Mr O hUiginn found this helpful, but added that there would need to be discussion at the political level at the IGC about what was said to the press about anything the two sides said to each other at the Conference about Hume/Adams.

15. Mr O'Donovan said that the communique need not imply - and should not inadvertently do so - that the ball had crossed over the net from the Irish to the British side.

16. On a protocol point, Mr O hUiginn said that it would be important not to leave Minister Higgins cooling his heels for too long.

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17. On format, Mr O hUiginn floated the possibility that an initial tete-a-tete session could be followed by the calling in by the two sides of their respective Talks teams.

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Request by Gerry Adams for meeting with IFI Chairman

18. After some discussion of this issue, it was agreed that the Chairman could be briefed in such a way as to inform him of the considerations which weighed first with the British side, and secondly with the Irish side, while making it clear that the ultimate decision was for him to take. As follow-up action it was agreed that it would be ascertained whether the Chairman would be content to have a joint oral briefing, or whether he wanted a letter.

Sinn Fein Office in Brussels

19. The British side mentioned to the Irish side that UKREP had suggested that any briefing of the Commission and the European Parliament might best be undertaken jointly by the British and Irish Governments. The Irish side thought this might be premature. They have not given much thought to the issue. They were not sure that the Sinn Fein Office would amount to much. It was agreed that the two sides should return to this subject later when more was known about whether there was anything in it.

20. The meeting ended with another apology from Mr O hUiginn. It had become apparent to the Irish side that it would not be possible to have a lengthy discussion of their paper, since this would not be tabled, too late for the Irish side to arrange to take us out to lunch. Instead, we would have to go upstairs to have some miserable sandwiches.

21. So we did.

(SIGNED)

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22 OCTOBER 1993
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