

**Dermot Nally
Papers**

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AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ATHA CLIATH 2

DUBLIN 2

8 June, 1993.

Mr. Frank Murray,
Secretary to the Government,
Government Buildings,
Merrion Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Frank,

We have tended not to do structured briefs for "Diner" meetings, since, more often than not they are preparations for Summits, and it is helpful to explore matters flexibly and informally to establish which arrangements can best meet the wishes of both Prime Ministers.

You may wish, however, to clear the broad lines of our approach with the Taoiseach. For what it is worth I would suggest the following points:

1. Agenda, participation and arrangements for Summit

The practical arrangements are I think mostly decided already. The agenda is likely to concentrate on Northern Ireland (prospects for Talks, security matters and perhaps some other aspects, such as cross-border economic cooperation for presentational purposes) and EC issues (essentially looking forward to the European Council - the issues the Taoiseach will have discussed with Danish PM Rasmussen - and, possibly, discussion of the rules for a share-out of the Structural Funds decided under British Chairmanship in Edinburgh). I am checking with our Political Director, at present in Luxembourg, whether there is any particular aspect of international relations in general which might be flagged on the British in discussing the agenda tomorrow.

2. Northern Ireland

The most important aspect of the "Diner" will be to give the other side the flavour of our thinking on Northern Ireland issues:

I would see two "messages":

Firstly, we should reaffirm the points made frequently to them, including by the Taoiseach at the last London Summit, that their

original game plan for the Talks (essentially aimed at one-sided constitutional change to meet unionist positions, in return for internal arrangements and a low key North South body) will not work. Any paper tabled by the British on this basis would not advance matters.

The second message should be that only the prospect of a much deeper balance between the two aspirations, on the lines set out in the Government Programme, is likely to prove viable as a basis for future arrangements. Since it is clear from recent unionist statements, including Paisley and Molyneaux at the weekend, that the unionists will not volunteer any movement in this direction, it is incumbent on the two Governments to take matters in hand on a basis to be agreed between them. If they do not, the prospects for Talks are poor and the alternative must be an energetic and if possible intensified working of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

3. Presentation of Summit outcome

The third point for discussion would be the presentation of the outcome of the Summit by the two Governments. On Northern Ireland it would presumably be a continuing commitment by the two Governments to the process of political dialogue. While continuing contacts as far as possible with the Parties, both Governments must recognise that the current unionist position makes this a somewhat unconvincing position in terms of relaunching Talks. The presentation should therefore contain the note that the two Governments will be continuing discussions between themselves on how best to make progress towards a solution. The British have hitherto been reluctant to go down this road (which they say raises unionist memories of the process leading to the Agreement) but they will find it more difficult to refuse to do so where the unionist, and particularly the DUP position, leaves the prospect for reviving Talks with unionist cooperation on the earlier terms of reference rather lacking in credibility.

I enclose some general speaking notes along these lines, essentially to illustrate the way we might develop some of these ideas in informal discussions around the table.

The report of the Liaison Group of Friday last will follow, but essentially it developed the ideas set out above and drew out British thinking somewhat on the proposed paper. It did not therefore introduce any new element into the situation which would need to be submitted to the Taoisach before tomorrow's meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Sean O hUiginn
Assistant Secretary

Introductory Presentation:

- Biannual Summits set the tone and parameters for Anglo-Irish relations.
- Therefore the presentational aspects are particularly important for opinion in both jurisdictions.
- It has traditionally been found very helpful to prepare these Summits in this informal "Diner" group.
- The present Summit will inevitably involve some private and public stock-taking of current options.

Present situation

- The violence continues on both sides. Our two security forces are cooperating very well and have had significant successes, but the public understandably focuses on the fact that terrorists on both sides still continue to bomb and murder with apparent ease.
- Everybody would agree the way forward is through political dialogue.
- Both Governments allowed "time out" for the local elections. Both now face obvious questions about how they intend to relaunch the political process, now that the elections are out of the way.

Prospects for Talks

- We do not see the prospects as very encouraging.

- Dr. Paisley has made clear with all the emphasis at his command, that the DUP will not return to the table until the Irish constitution is "dealt with" to his satisfaction, or there is at least a categorical prior commitment to do so.
- Mr. Molyneux has stated that the constitutional issue is basically a matter for the two Governments and, until they resolve it, he will confine himself to unspecified low-key local contacts.
- In those circumstances the Governments risk losing credibility and political authority if they continue merely to plead ineffectually for Talks.
- We must shortly either accept that Talks on present terms of reference will not work, or alternatively, change the situation so that meaningful negotiations can take place.
- If we decide to let the process be decided by the refusal of the unionist parties to negotiate, then we believe an emphatic intensification of the work of the Anglo-Irish Agreement would be the best antidote to a political vacuum.
- The other option is for the Governments to decide that they will take the process more directly in hand, decide between themselves on the way forward, and use their contacts and resources to win acceptance for this.

Government Programme

- The lines we think such an approach should follow is set out in the Government Programme:

- Essentially, we must strike a balance between the two traditions so that each has the fullest possible measure of expression and accomodation, and we eliminate as far as possible the notion of winners and losers.
- There is of course a conflict of allegiance which cannot be easily or directly reconciled.
- We both accept under the Agreement that there would be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority there.
- Unionists tend to feel this principle subsumes ~~the~~ whole reality, and that to develop all its logical consequences is to vindicate their position.
- The principle is crucially important, not least because it undermines the rationale for nationalist violence.
- At the same time it is clear that, for the moment, it is more in the nature of an outer limit of potential consensus between the two sides on the issue of status.
- If it is to become the basis of a positive programme of understanding between the two sides, our challenge is to show all nationalists that this principle, which safeguards the essence of the unionist position, is not the foundation for a denial of nationalist rights.
- For that reason it must be situated in a context which strikes a balance between the two aspirations.

British Government Paper

- On this issue of balance we felt serious doubts about your earlier approach in the Talks and your thinking on the proposed British paper.
- There have been helpful discussions in the Conference and Liaison Group on this.
- We acknowledge of course your right to table any paper you wish, but we would both be anxious to ensure that such a move would in fact help the process.
- You will recall our grave doubts from the outset on your original notion, that agreement could be found on the basis of change of the Irish Constitution, or constitutional change going in a unionist direction only, in return for internal and North-South institutions, the latter of fairly limited scope.
- There is, in our judgement, no prospect of Northern nationalists agreeing to a set of arrangements which is so heavily skewed in the Unionist direction, and we must remember that nationalist assent to new arrangements is no less important than unionist assent.
- What is needed is a far more radical balance between the two aspirations than what you appear to envisage. Without it, there is little likelihood of fresh talks reaching a successful conclusion, even if we could succeed in relaunching them.
- A British Government paper has a powerful political charge by virtue of the role which you play in the whole process.

- Since the British position will always be the outside limit of unionist movement, your paper would effectively set a minimalist agenda for new talks.
- The "lowest common denominator" approach in your paper is likely "to fall between the stools" rather than to make for the "new beginning in relationships" we pledged in the agreed basis for our Talks.
- The two Governments should sit down together and work out proposals which would provide the more radical balance needed between the two aspirations.
- Current unionist positions reinforce the view that a solution will not emerge spontaneously from the parties but must be created by the two Governments and "sold" by them to the parties. The local elections show that it is optimistic to expect a spontaneous "sea-change" from within Northern Ireland.
- We should therefore decide either that we will take the process firmly in hand on a basis agreed between us or, alternatively, accept that there is no alternative to the Agreement for the present and make clear we are basing our policies on the logic of that position.
- We should also make clear that the two Governments are unashamedly coordinating their positions. We are partners under the Agreement and our people expect the Irish Government to be partners in the search for any new Agreement.