

**Dermot Nally
Papers**

UCDA P254/12

SPEAKING NOTES

Peace in Northern Ireland is one of the two main objectives of my Government.

There is a very real danger that, notwithstanding the efforts of the two Governments both to revive political talks and to improve security, violence could continue almost indefinitely. There are huge costs for both countries. Would public opinion in either country forgive us, if we turned down an opportunity for peace, consistent with our principles? Conversely, there could be great credit due to Governments that had the courage to seize the opportunity.

Through a system of intermediaries, as well as direct talks with John Hume, Sinn Féin and the PIRA have indicated a willingness to accept a formula for peace, which would take the form of a joint declaration by the two Governments. The declaration is consistent with the political obligations of the two Governments under the Anglo-Irish Agreement and with the principle that a united Ireland would only come about by consent.

The declaration demands very little of the British Government. Since 1920 the British Government have always been prepared to facilitate the establishment of a united Ireland, provided a majority in Northern Ireland agree. For the past 20 years British Governments have sought to encourage agreement between the Northern Ireland parties and between North and South. We both surely want to encourage an agreed Ireland, whatever form that may take. Sinn Féin are very ideological. The important aspect though is their degree of preparedness now to accept practical political realities.

The Joint Secretary of the Unionist party, Mr Chris McGimpsey, has made it clear he personally has no problems with the concept of joint self-determination. The loyalist paramilitaries have also stated many times that they would cease their campaign once the IRA ceased. An end to violence in Northern Ireland, without prejudice to the right of Unionists to continue to withhold their consent to a united Ireland, would be of enormous benefit to everyone, and especially the Unionist community. There are, of course, certain extreme sections of Unionist opinion, who are ready to see betrayal in any move by the British Government, however slight.

I, of course, understand that you may have difficulties with some of the language, and that you may want to strengthen it in some places. Perhaps we could ask a couple of senior officials on each side to look at the document in detail, and see if it can be improved. Naturally, we would have to ascertain through intermediaries whether with the particular changes the declaration would still be acceptable as a basis for peace.

MEETING BETWEEN THE TAOISEACH AND THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

TETE A TETE

Steering Note

Objective is to persuade the British Prime Minister to accept that the draft joint declaration, which is of course open to further work and amendment, provides a basis for peace, and that peace in Northern Ireland must be the overriding objective of both Governments.

Naturally, work on the document is without prejudice to efforts to get the talks between the parties underway again.

Work on the draft Declaration could be carried out by two officials on each side.

If the declaration is changed, we would naturally have to satisfy ourselves that it would still meet the objective. If all went well, objective would be to have an agreed declaration and peace following the next Summit in the early autumn, or if possible sooner (after the marching season).