

**Dermot Nally  
Papers**

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SECRET

TETE-A-TETE BETWEEN THE TAOISEACH AND THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER,  
DUBLIN CASTLE, FRIDAY, 3 DECEMBER 1993

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After twenty-five minutes' private conversation, Mr Rod Lyne and the undersigned were invited in to take notes.

The Prime Minister said they should try and agree ideally what they would like the end product to be:

- a permanent cessation of violence
- the basis of a lasting political settlement

They were different possible routes to these objectives, all of which had difficulties. They wanted to take two tricks, the PIRA and the Nationalists, and the Unionists and Loyalists. There had to be an agreement that was politically saleable to both Parliaments and Cabinets, and to public opinion on both sides.

The Taoiseach said he shared both objectives. But if they could find a peace formula, it would change the whole environment of the talks process. He reminded the PM of their first conversation, where they committed themselves to trying to find a different way forward.

The Prime Minister also emphasised that first Downing Street meeting, though they did not have a particular route in mind at that stage.

The Taoiseach said they had spoken about this every time they had met. They had

their own agenda, long before people had heard about Hume/Adams. He had given him the document in June to start the process towards getting a joint Statement that was widely acceptable. Obviously, it had to command the support of both communities as well as attract the paramilitaries. It required a very neat and delicate balance. He expressed frustration and annoyance at some recent events. The Irish Government had exchanged information on a bona fide basis. The allegations and revelations had caused disturbance and concern to the cabinet last Tuesday, especially after the lengths they had gone at Brussels to distance themselves from Hume/Adams. He had had difficulties in his own party over it. Under the Anglo-Irish Agreement they had an opportunity to exchange information. 'The war is over' constituted a major security message. The Minister for Justice had been told nothing about it. The two Governments were not so close as we thought. He acknowledged that a courageous decision had been made to keep the connection open. Were there two processes going on in parallel, a sort of Dutch auction?

The Prime Minister said it was a good idea to clear the decks. They were still talking about the document received in June, and were making advances. They still wanted to produce an acceptable document. Last February's IRA message was very startling. Throughout the whole of the subsequent correspondence, there had been no face-to-face contact with the IRA, no negotiations. None of the two messages departed from publicly stated British Government positions. Should they have discussed it with other people? Only a handful of people knew. It had not been discussed in the British Cabinet. Could they talk to others, before talking to the Cabinet? In certain circumstances, lives could be at risk. The body language of the IRA was very unhelpful. The McGuinness and Adams statements had completely fabricated meetings, quotes, and messages.

They were not in a Dutch auction situation. If all had gone well, they would have

been entering talks about talks (with SF).

He then talked about frustrations. He said the Taoiseach had taken a number of brave decisions, so had the British in acknowledging the links with the IRA, publishing the documents, and affirming the links would stay open. The Guildhall Speech was another risk, and saying that if the IRA gave up violence, they could enter talks in a matter of months. The joint declaration was risky, particularly if it did not bring about an end in violence. It would have given some advances, which could be used as a new starting point. He said the British were utterly serious about the pursuit of peace. But they were frustrated over some recent newspaper reports, which made it more difficult to sell the outcome. He gave as an example, the report that the new British paper/proposals had been 'totally unacceptable', the line on self determination. There was no Maastricht deal with the UUP. The UUP supported the Government, because they did not like Labour Party policy. A more practical point was that the British Government were not just fed up, these matters made it more difficult to reach agreement.

He asked what about the document from the Irish Government for Strand III. There had only been a leaked version, which had caused quite an uproar, but that was now gone. They either needed the paper or mutual agreement on the British paper. If people separated the two Governments, the only gainers were the paramilitaries.

The Taoiseach reminded the Prime Minister that the Irish Government had the right to put in a document, whatever was in it. The Prime Minister had talked about kicking it over the roof. He also said some of the Irish briefing was to counter the notion coming from British sources that the Irish Government were seeking

self-determination for the island as a whole, and this needed to be corrected, as it was driving the Unionists mad.

A cessation of violence would transform the talks process. There were real problems and fears in the talks process. If violence were taken out of it, people would come to the talks in a better frame of mind. His aim was to freeze the position in time. The document did not undermine the principles of the British Government. The only people making serious sacrifices were Provisional Sinn Féin, in all their main objectives. He did not believe the frustrations of either Government had pushed them off course.

The Prime Minister said there had been anger at the suggestion the meeting would not go ahead, and at suggestions the two Governments had floated apart.

The Taoiseach, referring to the leaked Irish paper, said it had been an attempt by someone to nail down the peace initiative.

The Prime Minister also expressed some annoyance about the airing of the American position.

The Taoiseach referred to Molyneaux's suggestion of Strand I talks only.

The Prime Minister said the American view was that it was important the talks should continue. He said the Irish saw the Unionist block. The Unionists had to be brought along, even if they did not like every bit of it. Self-evidently, he was not in anyone's pocket.

The Taoiseach said there had not been such discussion in depth between the two Prime Ministers before. The document had taken on the Unionist fears, and inputted material. He had heard Gusto Spence was trying to get the Loyalist paramilitaries to the provisional IRA.

The Prime Minister asked, did we know, in the light of what the IRA were saying and doing, what their bottom line was, if there was one. If we were pretty sure that there would be a cessation of violence, this would obviously be a factor.

The Taoiseach replied we know what their objectives were, and what their justifications were. Their campaign was on the basis of ideology. The situation was wrong. It was clear after 25 years there was not going to be a military victory. There was a new generation of young Turks coming up, as in the Loyalist paramilitaries, who would make matters worse. They were on the point of generational change, existing leaders having led the IRA since they were very young. His information was that at every branch and sectoral level, the momentum for peace was very strong. But it was essential to challenge and test the notion that there was an opportunity for peace, and expose it for real or otherwise.

The undersigned was invited to give an assessment. I stressed the IRA's determination above all else to remain united and not to be split. Naturally, they wanted peace on the best possible terms. At the moment they were being left off the hook. They needed to be clearly pinned down.

The Prime Minister said they had some indications of a power struggle. What were they playing at in the leaks?

The Taoiseach said SF's main opposition was the SOLP in the North and FF in the South. It would be fatal to be seen to sell the Nationalist position short.

The Prime Minister then reverted to the worries of the Unionist Community. Rod Lyne, invited to intervene, said that over the last 12-15 days the Unionists had been more frightened, not just the traditional bedrock, but the moderates. Eames was worried. The Convention represented a sort of hidden agenda.

The Prime Minister said the middle-class who were strongly in favour of peace were beginning to wonder what was going on. The party did not know. There were fears of a slippery slope. Consent was not a total guarantee. They were paying the price of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, when the Unionists had not been kept informed. The Taoiseach recalled his own opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, partly on this basis, and explained the Convention as a waiting room. If talks did not start, SF had nowhere to go.

The Prime Minister said they could solve that problem. He then made a number of points about Unionist fears

- not knowing what was going on;
- concern that the two Governments would adopt a prejudicial formula on self-determination;
- that the British Government would join the ranks of the persuaders;
- that the British would acknowledge the 'value' of Irish unity.

Unionist starting points were:

- reaffirmation of the constitutional guarantee and consent;
- an acceptable self-determination formula;
- fear of joint authority and pan-Irish structures;
- worries about Articles 2 and 3

They agreed to go through the document in the afternoon. Then, next week in Brussels, they would identify remaining points of difference. The tete-a-tete, which began at 11.15 a.m. finished at about 1 O'clock.

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6 December 1993