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(26)

Tony

LETTER FROM SECRETARY OF STATE TO THE PRIME MINISTER DATED
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SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

PRIME MINISTER

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COPY of 4
Ref: JAS/JEN/42422

JOINT DECLARATION

We are to discuss this subject on Thursday. My assessment of where things now stand, and proposals for a way forward, are at Annex A. An up-to-date intelligence assessment is at Annex B.

2. As you know, the basic proposition, which both John Hume and the Irish Government (but not HMG) have been involved in negotiating, is that the Provisionals would end violence in return for a suitably worded Joint Declaration by the British and Irish Governments. The Butler/Nally Group had its fourth meeting on 6 October. The British side has deliberately not got involved in negotiating text. But the Group's discussions of principles which would be acceptable and unacceptable to us have led the Irish side to improve the text considerably. The latest version is at Annex C.

3. The Irish side have also confirmed, after the most recent meeting, that the Taoiseach would be prepared to offer four assurances:

- there have been no side deals or private understandings;
- the Irish Government remains committed to the political Talks, with which it sees this Initiative as compatible;
- it is not envisaged that Sinn Fein would secure, or expect, immediate talks with the British Government; and

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- after finalisation of the text and the necessary checks, the Taoiseach would be prepared to give his guarantee that a Declaration in these terms would bring about an end to PIRA violence.

4. For the reasons explained in paragraphs 2-6 of Annex A, my judgement is that we must insist that the text should include a more explicit reference to Northern Ireland's constitutional guarantee before we could let the Joint Declaration be pursued further as a possible route to peace. Annex D sets out how I suggest we should seek to amend the key paragraph 4 to achieve this. The Taoiseach will argue that this would make the text unsaleable to the Provisionals. This may be right, but there is a reasonable chance that it is wrong. In any case, my judgement is that such a change is a political imperative for us, both for containing loyalist and unionist reactions in Northern Ireland, and for domestic political reasons. The Taoiseach would find it hard to say that our insistence was unreasonable, and might not hold out against a suitable form of words.

5. Jim Molyneaux's position will be critical. The Reverend Martin Smyth MP's carefully considered statement yesterday that unionists would be prepared to talk with Sinn Fein if there had been a genuine end to violence, is a significant and helpful development. Before returning to the Irish, we should therefore try to secure Molyneaux's private understanding and muted public reaction, on the basis of inclusion in the text of an explicit reference to the constitutional guarantee as at Annex D. I suggest you should do this in a discussion, on Privy Council terms, with him. Other aspects of handling would also need to be very carefully worked out.

6. We need to move quickly. Speculation and tension have been mounting since the Hume/Adams' statement of 25 September and cannot be contained indefinitely. For the reasons given in Annex A, and



subject to Molyneaux's reaction, I recommend that we should indicate to the Irish Government that we are content for them to proceed, but only if an explicit reference to the constitutional guarantee is included, and the words "freely and collectively" are removed from the penultimate sentence of paragraph 4, as in the text at Annex D.

7. I am copying this only to the Foreign Secretary and Sir Robin Butler. You may want to consider whether the circle should be widened before decisions are taken.

A. Bevan

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PM

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12 October 1993

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United Kingdom*