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HMA

**NORTHERN IRELAND: IRISH OUTLOOK ON THE SUMMIT**

1. Geraldine Kennedy, Political Correspondent of the Irish Times, gave me a run-down on the present situation. She is following the issue full time, and has been variously briefed by Hume, Adams and Albert Reynolds in some depth.

Simple Language

2. The Irish Government had concluded that there were strong grounds to believe that the IRA (or at least a large majority of them) would stop their campaign in exchange for a "simple" formula, based on what had come out of Hume/Adams, and that this could and should be articulated by both Governments at the 3(?) December Summit, to achieve peace. Without this there was no prospect of successful political negotiations.

3. The key elements were

a) **Self determination:** recognition that this was a matter for the people of Ireland as a whole, but expressed separately North and South. It might seem dry dogma to us, but modern Irish history had been all about finding forms of words to end fighting, and doing it separately North and South guaranteed that Northern Ireland would stay in the UK as long as Unionists had a majority. It was in one sense a "con", or "mirror", because it actually entrenched Unionists' existing guarantee. But the IRA were happy enough with it, and if that was what it

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took for them to forsake violence, who could reasonably refuse? Spring's 6 Principles covered the double basis for self determination and the question of consent in terms no Irish government had previously dared to do. They could provide a starting point for a draft Summit text (in fact had already been turned into one, she had been told).

b) **Reaffirmation of no selfish British motive:** language on this point, repeating what had already been said by Sir P Mayhew in recent speeches was "well known" to have been included in the UK framework text handed over in bilateral discussions on constitutional balance. It would make all the difference for this to be repeated as a solemn governmental undertaking (remarks in speeches carried relatively little weight).

c) **Constitutional balance:** but neither this nor the 6 Principles were enough: they had (as Adams had put it) no 'dynamic'. So some recognition of Nationalists' aspiration to unity had to be introduced to balance the thing out. This meant Britain somehow "joining the ranks of the persuaders". This need not cause the difficulty so crude a phrase might imply. All that was needed was for HMG to declare that it was as neutral about Northern Ireland staying in the UK as it was about a united Ireland. We had been close to it in the Anglo-Irish Agreement - a point Hume had persuaded Adams to accept.

4. There would be an Irish commitment to **amend Articles 2 and 3** in the context of an overall settlement, and if Spring had his way, another to attach the text of a **Covenant** specifically referring to "Unionists" rather than a "majority" to the constitution. This would guarantee fair play when demographics reduced them to a minority. The drafting of Principle 4 had tried to telescope these approaches too tightly, hence the problematic reference in it to Unionists by that name.

#### Balance of Risks

5. She believed there was nothing more required from HMG, certainly nothing about "withdrawal". Adams had accepted that neither HMG nor Unionists could accept that. The Irish Government believed that what was sought should cause no difficulties, on its merits. But they were not at all sure HMG would agree. Albert Reynolds believed that if Mr Major could not or would not sign up to it in December, then **public opinion** in the Republic, the UK and internationally would blame him and regard the Irish position as an eminently reasonable effort to deliver peace. The same applied to the IRA if they refused. He had told her that they would lose all popular support and he



would lock them up. So Reynolds believed he was pretty well covered. He had admitted to her that he ran some risk, if HMG and/or the IRA refused and Hume then said that what had been offered was a watered down and inadequate version of what he himself had achieved with Adams. But as long as Hume was on board this should be manageable. He had kept quiet since coming out of hospital, seen Reynolds on 14 November and would meet him again this coming weekend. Albert was taking a gamble on the Prime Minister, but he was a notoriously foxy punter and covered his bets as far as he could.

#### Unionist Reaction Adequately Foreseen?

6. Unionist reactions would be crucial. Molyneaux was not rocking the boat. He had gone silent however, not necessarily a good sign. Theology came into it in more ways than one. Unionists with predestination in their outlook were less likely to stomach terrorists being given absolution. They would also be less willing to play with words. But she thought that while Unionists might fear a trick, on inspection they should see that there were solid advantages for them. It was generally felt in Irish Government circles that HMG should square them. She said Spring had done his best to open a dialogue, it was not his fault.

#### Verification

7. Reynolds had told her that he saw no difficulties about verification of any cessation of hostilities "sure, governments have ways of sorting these things out". She did not know if this reflected confidence, or confidence based on detailed contingency planning.

8. I played as straight a bat as I was able, based on the guidance circulated after the Prime Minister's Mansion House speech.

(SIGNED)

J A Dew