

cc P.S. S.A.S. (L.A.S.)

vps Richard Armstrong (L)

memo ✓ N. Beeton

N. Williams 8/12/93

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ID. 43881

FROM: ✓ J A Dew
British Embassy, Dublin

DATE: 8 December 1993

cc: PS/PUS-B
PS/Mr Fell-B
Mr Thomas-B
Mr Bell-B
Mr Watkins-B
Mr Cooke-B
Mr Brooker-B
Mr Maccabe-B
Mr Archer, RID-B

HMA
Mr McKervill

NORTHERN IRELAND: JOINT DECLARATION ETC

1. I had a further discussion yesterday with Geraldine Kennedy, Political Correspondent of the Irish Times.

2. She had spent over an hour with the Taoiseach on Sunday 5 December, discussing his peace initiative in considerable detail.

a) he would by no means automatically accept whatever text could be negotiated with the British. In his view a 90% chance of success would be no more worth taking than a 50% chance - he would want to be 95% sure before he would run with a text;

b) but he had no objective yardstick against which to measure the crucial difference between 95% and 90% - he would have to take a personal decision in the light of "all the circumstances" at the time;

c) he would however want to show the text to John Hume: this would give him some feel for how far it was from the Provisionals' bottom line, and how far (if at all) Hume would be prepared to endorse it;

d) he believed that the British Government had concluded that the Provisionals were tired and were seriously seeking a way out of violence, and that therefore it did not matter if this process dragged on for several months, and that any failure now need only be temporary, the prospect remaining open for another try later. He did not share this assessment, believing that there was a window open now which would inevitably close if the present opportunity were not seized. Rejection of the opportunity by the British and Irish Governments, or the British alone, would in fact strengthen the hand of those who actively wanted to pursue terrorism, and would act as a recruiting sergeant for PIRA among nationalists;

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FROM: TONY BRYTON
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8 DECEMBER 1993

e) he believed, and hoped, that HMG were keeping Molyneaux fully abreast of developments on the text. (He also said this quite openly in the Dail answering questions yesterday afternoon.) He would prefer to have his own contacts with him, but in their absence he relied on HMG to cover this crucial flank;

f) he could not see why finding some language on self determination should be so difficult for HMG, or Unionists. He was, when it came down to it, offering a fairly innocuous formula which while touching off all the right echoes for the Provisionals in fact gave the Unionists a guarantee that their status (ie within the UK) would not change without majority consent. Coming from the Irish, given in the name of Nationalism, this was worth more (surely ?) than the same guarantee coming from HMG alone;

g) if he could achieve a text which had the necessary (95%) credibility, and endorsement from Hume, it would at the very least put the Provisionals in a severe difficulty. They would not be able to reject it that easily, still less defend continued violence because of its alleged shortcomings. They would become a straightforward security problem and he would be ready to deal toughly with them on that basis.

3. Unlike some other commentators I have spoken to recently, she took the view that failure would not affect Reynolds' position that much. He would blame the British and the Provisionals. Public opinion would sympathise, on both counts.

4. She was particularly insistent on the question of an all-Ireland Convention, which had been reported in the weekend press. She had been the first to reveal that this idea was part of the Hume/Adams proposals some weeks ago. She had been incensed that the Irish Government had denied her report at the time. I was non-committal.

5. She confirmed reports I had heard elsewhere that the Editor of the Irish Times maintains frequent and regular telephone contact with Gerry Adams and that the paper effectively provides Adams with a propaganda platform.

(SIGNED)
J A Dew

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