

SPEAKING NOTE

1. We have considered the scheme and the text very carefully. We fully appreciate the value of the potential prize. There are aspects of the approach which have evident attractions.
2. We have had to assess the impact the Joint Declaration would have in the light of the hostile climate created by knowledge of the Hume/Adams dialogue over a period, and in particular the démarche of 25 September. (We understand you wisely did all you could to head this off.) Since 25 September uncertainty and suspicion have been increasing with each day that passes.
3. Any Joint Declaration now would be seen either as the product of a "pan-nationalist front", including the terrorists, to which HMG had unwisely acceded (and the language is not inconsistent with this) or as the result of a process of covert negotiation with the Provisionals in which HMG, despite its declared policies, had been indirectly engaged. In either event it would prompt a highly adverse reaction in Northern Ireland itself, notwithstanding the hopes raised elsewhere.
4. Our judgement is that the reaction would be very severe, calling in question confidence in HMG and its fidelity to its stated policies. The terms and overall tone of the Declaration would add credibility to this.
5. The intense, if irrational, fear of betrayal would feed directly into loyalist terrorism, as well as alienation and disaffection of the unionist constitutional politicians. Loyalist targetting of uninvolved Catholics, and perceived representatives of the "pan-Nationalist Front", would make it very difficult for the Provisionals to sustain any cessation.

6. We have had to conclude that it would be wrong to proceed. But we remain deeply interested in, and committed to, the ending of violence from both sides. We have concluded that, because of the effect on the loyalists, it would not work in present circumstances to respond in the form of a statement which, however much it protects the UK position, is clothed in nationalist language. But our response to a cessation of PIRA violence would be positive, and we would be interested in pursuing with you how we might take advantage of this opportunity which you have done so much to help to create.

Also a concern that, had we proceeded, it would be for an uncertain future. You have been asked about the progress of preparation for the Convention. Some significant progress has been made. The main elements of the Convention are a permanent ceasefire, the release of prisoners, the ending of the Provisionals' armed struggle, and the ending of the loyalists' armed struggle. These are not parties to the Convention and the possibility of their campaign ending is doubtful and uncertain. There is certainly no realistic prospect that the Provisionals will ever be a permanent ceasefire, let alone a full cessation of violence. We hope that the ending of the loyalists' armed struggle will be a step towards a permanent ceasefire, but our great concern is that the Provisionals' ability to maintain a ceasefire even if they were asked to do so.

ADDITIONAL POINTS TO MAKE

1. Will need to agree our public posture. IGC will meet next Wednesday and there will be strong expectation of discussion there about Hume/Adams. We are extremely grateful to you for taking all of the strain so far. Perhaps we can now help. If it would help you, you could now begin to indicate, in advance of the IGC that, as part of your evaluation of the report Hume had given you, Mr Spring proposed at the IGC to seek the views of HMG about the climate of opinion in Northern Ireland following the Hume/Adams statement of 25 September, and in the light of continuing bombings in London and elsewhere. But no proposals or report being put to the British Government - simply their assessment sought, to inform Irish Government's evaluation. Such a line would prepare the ground for either more meetings (perhaps with Unionist politicians, other NI figures) or adjustment of your line prior to announcing that time was not right to pursue what had been imaginative work which still offered hope for the future etc etc.

2. Also a concern that, had we proceeded, it would be for an uncertain purpose. You have been candid about the absence of preparation for the Convention. More significantly, the Joint Declaration makes no demands of the Provisionals, even of a semantic kind. They are not parties to it: and the possibility of their campaign ending is doubtful and uncertain. There is certainly no bankable assurance from the Provisionals of even a temporary ceasefire, let alone a firm renunciation of terrorism which we, and all the victims of past atrocities, would expect as a minimum to see. Loyalist terrorism would, also put great strain on Provisionals' ability to sustain a 'ceasefire' even if they were indeed committed to one.

3. A number of recent public statements suggest indeed that the Provisionals expect this initiative to be carried through without any compromise to their freedom to pursue their objectives in any way they choose. "Peace", which in their ideology is often code for the attainment of their objectives even in the face of the normal tenets of democracy, is implicitly offered only at the end of the process.

4. Even if the Joint Declaration were to succeed in triggering a ceasefire, there is nothing in the scheme to affect their rhetorical and political commitment to the "armed struggle" or to diminish their military capacity to pursue it.

5. The fact that the tone and cumulative effect of the language of the text is, as you have acknowledged, one-sided is highly relevant. It does not mention the United Kingdom, still less Northern Ireland's place in it. You have also been categorical that an explicit reference to the constitutional guarantee would render it "unsaleable". This is a point of enormous significance in both substantive and presentational terms. This is because the guarantee is, for us, a constitutional reality, the basis of our policy in respect of Northern Ireland and a political imperative.

6. Against this background, we have made a rounded assessment of the Joint Declaration approach. The adverse reaction it would provoke is certain: greatly exacerbated by the premature Hume/Adams démarche. It might also be long-term. The benefits are uncertain and, if they exist at all, may be temporary.