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J MOLYNEUX'S 'BLUEPRINT FOR STABILITY'

Late last night JM handed me an early draft of his 'Blueprint for Stability' which he intends shortly to publish. The following lines are very much a first reaction and are designed to assess his current mood rather than as a detailed analysis of the proposals (which will now be put in hand).

Firstly as might be expected it is very much a Shand One document, the proposed structures being largely in line with those which we would put forward were we to publish firm proposals. There are differences of detail and emphasis but the skeleton is largely the same and certainly provides a fruitful platform upon which to build through negotiations in Shand One.

The significance is that it underlines the strength of the 'internal settlement' argument in JM's mind. It barely touches on positive suggestions for improving and structuring relations with the Irish Republic. "Our ambition would be to develop cooperation on matters of ~~our~~ mutual interest and concern" is the sum of its cap-stilt towards Shand 2, and Shand 3 including the Articles 2 & 3 elements are placed firmly in the hands of the Government. The door to 3 shanded negotiations is thus just, but only just, ajar.

It is interesting to note however in JM's introduction that while selling the 'Blueprint' he sets out fall-backs in the event of failure


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by the Parties to achieve agreement. Contrary to (my) expectations the de minimis devolution of power to district councils is a fall back and not a primary aim, and "for the time being". The same case is made for 'administration devolution' although it is, arguably, already there.

Significantly also the Select Committee and strengthening legislative procedures appears in this introduction rather than in the Blue Print, and are described as part of the development of public confidence in the political process rather than as part of an integratist approach as such. In terms of the longer game this is helpful.

Finally he appends a late submission from 3 "very prominent businessmen". When I met him on Monday he put enormous store by this submission linking it to the importance of the authors but refusing to breach their confidentiality for the moment. He regarded this document as seminal both in nature and in the context of its authors. I understood that it had his support which is why he wished to attach it as an Appendix.

Significantly it calls for inter alia:

1. Early talks involving relevant participants
2. Involvement of those who demonstrate they have abandoned the argument of force.
3. Recognition of the right to pursue deversentially the aim of a United Ireland.
4. Arrangements for partnership on matters of mutual interest based on full equality, becoming increasingly close - but without threat to NI's position within the UK.

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5. Acceptance of the need for a comprehensive agreement encompassing the new arrangements between the governments of UK and RoI.

This goes much further than the Blueprint in its scope and JM's enthusiasm for it offers a very real hope that he could be moved quickly off "stead one only" back into wider dialogue among the 3 shores. It certainly acts as an antidote to the other evidence of slippage from UUP to DUP and is worth building on in JM's mind.

Michael Ancram