



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

8 December 1993

**JOINT DECLARATION: CONVERSATION WITH
MARTIN MANSERGH**

As anticipated in the Cabinet Secretary's minute of 7 December, Martin Mansergh telephoned me today. He passed on the following:

- the Taoiseach could live with the compromises in the revised text if the Prime Minister could do likewise. This, of course, was not to say that the text was ideal from the Taoiseach's point of view;
- the Taoiseach had a strong preference for the constitutional guarantee to be reiterated in the second, rather than the fourth, paragraph;
- the Irish would probably wish to make a small variation to the agreed scenario on the Irish Convention. (This, of course, was a point outside the revised text.) For domestic political reasons, they would not wish it to appear that they were responding to a step (viz an announcement of a cessation of violence) taken by PIRA. They would therefore wish to make their unilateral proposal about a Convention soon after the conclusion of the Joint Declaration. Mansergh said that, for example, the Taoiseach might want to say something about this at the joint press conference. I sounded a warning note on the latter detail. If the Irish put forward their idea as soon as the Joint Declaration was published, I feared that the Unionists might see it as trickery. Mansergh saw the difficulty. He thought it should be possible to find some middle way. It was agreed that this scenario needed further discussion, possibly on Friday;

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- reverting to the text, Mansergh said the Irish had an additional suggestion which was not an issue of principle. The amended text had lost its final upbeat. The Irish thought it might be useful to round it off with a "high sounding" final paragraph. They were drafting something, which they would put to us as soon as possible. The paragraph was not intended to include any new points of substance. Mansergh was very clear that this was a thought that we could accept or reject as we wished. I said that we would look at their words;
- on the timing of the meeting to launch the Joint Declaration, Mansergh said that the Irish preference was now to look for a date early next week. This was because of their concern that delay would leave the deal vulnerable to external pressures. He suggested late afternoon on Tuesday 14 December (ie around 4.30pm, after Prime Minister's Questions). I said that we had yet to carry forward our own debate on timing. (Comment: the Irish suggestion might be possible in terms of the Prime Minister's diary, though we would have to rearrange his weekly Audience.)
- as we agreed, I warned Mansergh that we would probably have a few changes to suggest once Ministers had looked at the text tomorrow. He saw no difficulty over inserting "the island of" before Ireland in paragraph 3;
- on paragraph 4, I said that I could not forecast at this stage whether or not we would be able to meet the Irish wish to move the constitutional guarantee to paragraph 2, though I noted that this was a strong request from the Taoiseach. However, if the change was made, we would need to propose some readjustment to the beginning of the paragraph. It would not be right for it to go straight into the "Brooke formula" without an opening sentence which would seem more positive to Unionists. Mansergh did not jib at this;
- also in paragraph 4, I warned that we were likely to want to remove the reference to a "sovereign united Ireland" in the sixth sentence, which we ourselves had proposed. Mansergh said that this was language from the Anglo-Irish agreement. However, he would not object if we went back to "independent" structures. I did not comment further.

As time was pressing, I did not mention the other two small changes, but simply said that there were further points which I did not expect to cause serious difficulty.

During the conversation, Mansergh made some additional points:

- there had been a further meeting in Dublin this morning with the clergyman who was in touch with the Loyalist paramilitaries (presumably a reference to Father Magee). He had laid down the basic rights for which the Loyalists demanded respect. These were unexceptionable. He had also sought assurances, on behalf of the Loyalists, that the Irish government would not seek to pre-determine the outcome of future political talks; and that it would respect the consent principle. These assurances had been given. Mansergh said that Magee had not been shown the latest text, though he had previously seen one of the earlier versions. Magee had said that the head of the UVF had been monitoring closely the negotiations between the two governments, and had also scrutinised the published texts of British exchanges with PIRA - but had found nothing which caused him concern. Mansergh's interpretation of the questions relayed by Magee was that the Loyalist politicians were stoking up alarm among their own people, and that the paramilitaries wanted to know whether this was justified;
- Mansergh said that on the afternoon of 8 December the Taoiseach would be seeing John Hume and Seamus Mallon of the SDLP. Reynolds would urge them to be supportive, and restrained, but would not give them the text. The Irish thought that it would be helpful if the Prime Minister could also speak to Hume;
- I mentioned that Hume had been reported in a British newspaper today as attacking the proposal for a Select Committee, and linking this with the talks process. This was one area in which he might be persuaded to show restraint. It could well be that some movement on the Select Committee would reassure Unionist MPs and help them to accept a Joint Declaration. Mansergh agreed. He said we would have noted that the Irish government had been silent on this subject of late. He saw a parallel between unilateral action by us on the Select Committee and by the Irish on their convention.

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Finally, Mansergh referred to the front page article in today's *Irish Times* by Geraldine Kennedy - headlined "Governments divided over all-Ireland convention". He said that his side was not responsible for the article. I said that we too had stuck rigorously to the agreed line of briefing, which in general had held well for the past three days. I also passed on, privately, an indication of a Irish source which might have inadvertently leaked information about yesterday's talks (some evidence fell into Gus O'Donnell's lap last night).

I am copying this letter to John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), John Pitt-Brooke (Ministry of Defence), David Blatherwick (Dublin - by fax) and to Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

RODERIC LYNE

Jonathan Stephens, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.