

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TÊTE-À-TÊTE MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND
THE TAOISEACH, DUBLIN CASTLE, 3 DECEMBER 1993

Michael Mansergh (Special Adviser to the Taoiseach) and I joined the tête-à-tête between the two Prime Ministers from 1150 until about 1300.

The Taoiseach agreed with the Prime Minister that the common objectives of the two governments were to promote a cessation of violence and a lasting political settlement. He also agreed that, to achieve them, it was necessary to carry both sides of the community in Northern Ireland, and opinion within the government, parliament and public in the UK and Ireland.

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach had been working towards these objectives since their first meeting in Downing Street soon after the Taoiseach took office - and long before people had heard of the Hume/Adams dialogue. Since June 1993, they had been working on a draft Joint Declaration originally put forward by the Taoiseach, but since amended towards a more balanced document.

Recent events had not helped this work. The Irish Government had felt let down on learning of exchanges between HMG and PIRA, and wondered whether it was caught in a Dutch auction. The Prime Minister said there had been no Dutch auction. HMG's exchanges with PIRA had been limited in nature and consistent with our public position. The confidential nature of these

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exchanges had made it impossible for the Prime Minister to discuss them with the Irish Government.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the briefing of the press by the Irish Government had been most unhelpful, and had made success much harder to achieve. The Irish had failed to acknowledge the advances and risks taken by HMG, and had made damaging remarks about self-determination, about the British draft statement, and about an alleged deal with the UUP. The Irish had also impeded the talks process by failing to produce the paper requested in September. The leak of a draft of that paper to the Irish Press had caused uproar in the North, by giving the impression that the Irish had a hidden agenda.

The Taoiseach said he was following the simple approach of trying to freeze the position in Northern Ireland while securing a cessation of violence. This would create a better environment for political talks. He asserted that the talks process was not going anywhere, and was being influenced by the UUP's desire to make progress on strand one and ignore the other two elements. The Prime Minister rebutted this.

The two Prime Ministers assessed the position of PIRA. They agreed that the recent disclosures and ensuing propaganda campaign by PIRA made it difficult to be certain of PIRA's attitude to a cessation of violence. The Taoiseach argued that acceptance by the Provisionals of the Joint Declaration would represent the abandonment by them of their four principal objectives over the past 25 years. The Joint Declaration would place them in a dilemma. It would be damaging and demoralising for the organisation to have to reject peace after

extensive internal canvassing of a cessation of violence. The Taoiseach asserted that generational change presented an opportunity to capitalize on war-weariness among PIRA's veterans, against the risk that a new generation of young turks might take over.

The Prime Minister described the heightened fears of Unionists, who were worried that the Irish Government wanted to place them on a slippery slope towards joint authority. He thought that the sticking points for the Unionists were the constitutional guarantee and consent principle; joint authority and pan-Irish structures; Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution; and HMG's refusal to become a "persuader" of the value of a united Ireland.

The Taoiseach broadly agreed, but commented that Articles 2 and 3 were seen in the South as a "green herring". He said that the Joint Declaration respected the sticking points of the Unionists and the principles of the British Government.

The two Prime Ministers agreed that the draft Joint Declaration should be examined in detail by both delegations in the afternoon plenary session.

3 December 1993

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