

SECRET AND PERSONAL



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From the Private Secretary

10 November 1993

*Dear Jonathan,*

**PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH JAMES MOLYNEAUX MP  
TUESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 1993**

The Prime Minister and your Secretary of State saw Mr. Molyneux (who was alone) for nearly an hour.

Molyneux said that the Prime Minister's joint statement with the Taoiseach had provided a fair bit of reassurance. However, he was concerned at the perception that the Taoiseach was moving away from the joint statement. Reynolds seemed to be hijacking the Hume/Adams bandwagon. Molyneux cited his remarks in the "On the Record" interview.

The Prime Minister thought that the Taoiseach was having to guard his back domestically. Molyneux said that people were asking questions about the Taoiseach's confident predictions that peace could be achieved within a few weeks. What was he going to offer the IRA? Sir Patrick Mayhew said that the Taoiseach had had a difficult time at his party conference, and had said things that were in conflict with the joint statement.

The Prime Minister said that he did not know about the state of relations between the Taoiseach and the IRA. We had made clear that we would not engage in any secret deals. We stood by the constitutional guarantee. There were indications of war weariness on the part of leading members of the IRA. They seemed to have realised that they would not be able to drive the British army out of Northern Ireland, or this British Government into a deal on joint sovereignty. The IRA could not be rewarded for stopping the violence. However, if there was a cessation and a fire-break period, the way could be open for them to join a democratic political process as a party that had foresworn violence. This had to be a permanent cessation of violence, not a temporary ceasefire, whether for six months or a year or longer. The Prime

SECRET AND PERSONAL

SECRET AND PERSONAL

- 2 -

Minister said that he had told John Hume that he would not depart from the position set out in the joint statement. He had not given Hume any messages to pass. Nor had he invited Hume to report back. He had simply said, again, that his door remained open.

Molyneux said that he had had a friendly message from the Taoiseach before the party conference, and had replied in a similar spirit. Reynolds had appeared to be moving in the right direction. There had been the possibility of a meeting with Dick Spring. But the latest statements by Reynolds were not having a good effect. We needed to get him back into line.

Sir Patrick Mayhew said that, in his party speech, the Taoiseach had said in terms that the political talks process should resume immediately.

The Prime Minister said that the Taoiseach had spoken of his contacts with clergymen in Northern Ireland. He thought that this included Archbishop Eames, who had now written to the Prime Minister. Molyneux said that he was not in regular contact with Eames. He had not spoken to him for a few months.

Molyneux urged the Government to press ahead with Michael Ancram's bilateral talks. He thought it might be possible to get Ian Paisley off his present hook. The process could be carried quite a long way at bilateral level. Sir Patrick Mayhew and Michael Ancram were handling it with great skill. The bilateral talks could yield significant benefits, and should be intensified.

Sir Patrick Mayhew said that we were now coming to the end of the exploratory phase. But he thought it still too soon to lay out the Government's position in public. The SDLP might draw back if we did so. Molyneux agreed, but said that we should let the public see that the process was accelerating.

Molyneux asked what the IRA might hope to gain as a reward for a cessation of violence. Were they hoping for an amnesty? The Prime Minister replied that no-one had raised the question of an amnesty with us. Amnesties were relevant to political offences, not to murderers.

Molyneux said he was glad to hear this. An amnesty could be an incitement to restart violence, in the expectation that imprisonment would only be temporary. He knew that Adams had consulted IRA prisoners as well as the Provisional Army Council. He wondered what the Taoiseach might intend to offer Adams as an incentive.

SECRET AND PERSONAL



The Prime Minister said that he did not know what was in the mind of Albert Reynolds. But the important point was that we did not have it in mind to offer concessions.

Molyneux said that he had had a meeting earlier in the day with Paddy Ashdown, whose position was in line with the Prime Minister's. He was due to see John Smith. It would help if all three parties could adopt a similar stance. (He went on to express doubts about the Opposition spokesman on Northern Ireland, who had let him down after their first meeting, in the time of Neil Kinnock.)

Molyneux said that three self-styled "community workers" had been to see him. He did not believe that they themselves were terrorists. But there were terrorists in their families. They had said that the UDA and UVF were reasonably content with the consent principle. They had left the impression that the paramilitaries were prepared to stay their hand so long as the IRA were not given a reward for a cessation of violence. This could prevent further Greysteel-type episodes.

The Prime Minister asked what would be seen as a reward. Molyneux defined this as the sort of offer which had been dangled by Southern Irish politicians. Sir Patrick Mayhew said that we were not prepared to offer anything beyond being allowed to join the political human race after a period of decontamination. The Prime Minister said that allowing the IRA into the political process did not mean that they would then get their way within it.

Molyneux repeated that we should concentrate on making progress in the bilateral talks. The Prime Minister agreed, but said that we wanted to get back to more formal talks at some point. By refusing to talk to Hume, Paisley was giving Hume a veto on progress. Molyneux agreed. He could see the value in holding formal talks; but it would be risky to do so if we could not get everyone on board.

Molyneux said that businessmen and churchmen in Northern Ireland tended to dwell on the phrase that the "political vacuum" should be filled. He personally favoured something on the lines of the 1979 Conservative Manifesto, which had envisaged a regional assembly. Anyone who boycotted this would miss out. There would need to be checks and balances to avoid Unionist domination. Stormont had provided "close contact government" and democratic accountability. He thought the idea was attractive to some SDLP councillors. Hume did not speak for them all.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

- 4 -

The meeting ended with a brief discussion of the line to be taken with the press.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

*Yours etc,*

*Roderic*

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SECRET AND PERSONAL

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