

15 November 1993

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#### MEETING WITH THE TAOISEACH, 12 NOVEMBER

1. I enclose the promised account of Friday's meeting (I have not copied it: if you are content, could you please do this?) Our subsequent dinner with Mansergh and OhUiginn added little of substance. They sought to persuade us that they were justified in their assessment of what PIRA might need to call a halt to violence. We sought to persuade them - with difficulty - that a Joint Declaration could present the most severe political difficulties for the Prime Minister and the Government. We also explored to death the reasons for the fundamental misunderstanding between the two Heads of Government. The important thing is that following your visit we both have a better idea of the other's position.
2. You invited my comments. First, I believe that most of what the Taoiseach said can be taken at face value. He is convinced that an opportunity exists, and he wants to take it for the best of motives and because, as he put it, not to take it would be politically untenable. He has great faith in his relationship with the Prime Minister and he has gone out on a limb with nationalist opinion in the Republic (including some in his own party) and in Northern Ireland in coming out in British company against John Hume, Sinn Fein and the simplistic call for "peace". Like many Irish people, he believes that as regards Irish affairs the leaning curve of British politicians is steep and their attention span brief: another reason for him to go for it now. He also shares the widespread Irish assumption that the British, for whom Ireland is only one of many concerns, tend to get it wrong unless they are guided by the Irish. The resultant rather hectoring approach can easily look like threatening behaviour - as it did on Friday. Of course, the lines between guidance, warning and threat are thin ones, and the Irish are quite able to overstep them. Many of their recent public statements constitute an attempt to put pressure on us to behave sensibly, as they would see it, and this is doubtless one of the purposes of the Tanaiste's three-day visit to the United States beginning today.

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3. I would distrust what the Taoiseach said about the acceptability of the draft Declaration to unionists. I understand that Archbishop Eames' account of what he has told the Taoiseach is not quite what we heard from the Taoiseach on Friday. More generally, the Taoiseach (and the Tanaiste, and other Ministers) have a tendency to believe in the power of words to bridge gaps of substance; and to allow their judgment to be influenced by what they want to hear. (They recently came a cropper over EC structural funds for precisely these reasons.) They are therefore not the best brokers of texts - though I would trust Mansergh on this more than I would the others.

4. I was struck by the emotional way in which the Taoiseach reacted to our attempts to probe his views on alternative strategies (provoking a negative PIRA response; offering only a seat at the table as the price of the cessation of violence; issuing a declaration only when violence has stopped). He refused to discuss them and produced an artificial head of steam. This and his fake tantrum at the end of the meeting were obviously designed to underline his determination to proceed on the course he proposes and not be sidetracked. However, I believe that the views we heard from him and the others on nationalist and PIRA psychology were right. You objected that it was all theology; but they are theologians.

5. I find it difficult to say that we should do as the Taoiseach wants, because I am not the judge of unionist reactions and anyway I have not seen the draft text. But if we turn him down, I am reasonably certain that the Taoiseach's warnings about reaction in the Republic will prove correct, and that we risk some sort of a rupture with the Irish. How bad a rupture is hard to say. The Irish don't want a rupture any more than we do, and were Reynolds to escape from his hook - either by smoking out the Provisionals, or by finding an anodyne formula at the 3 December Summit which let the air out of the bag slowly - we might both escape without much damage. But some in the Irish Government (perhaps not Reynolds) would want to make us pay for ignoring their wishes, and there would be plenty of others - notably PIRA/Sinn Fein - eager to drive any wedges in deeper.

6. But I do believe that this could be a time of opportunity, and that we should do all we can to test it. A no-risk response would be unlikely to do this.

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MEETING WITH THE TAOISEACH  
DUBLIN, 12 NOVEMBER 1993**

Mr. Lyne (No.10) and Mr. Blatherwick (HMA, Dublin) met the Taoiseach for about an hour and a quarter on Friday evening, 12 November in his office in Dublin. He was accompanied by Mr. Martin Mansergh, his Adviser, and Mr. Sean OhUiginn of the DFA.

Mr. Lyne said that the Prime Minister had asked him to come to Dublin to express the Prime Minister's personal views to the Taoiseach. He had been surprised at the Taoiseach's letter. He had thought the two governments were together, but they had clearly drifted apart. The Irish letter following the meeting in London on 10 November had come as a bombshell. The Taoiseach said he had taken the 10 November meeting as a flat rejection of the peace framework proposal. Mr. Lyne said that this was not so. The Prime Minister was keen to explore opportunities to end the violence and was not closing doors or rowing back. Ministers were considering the latest Irish text. We wanted to talk to Archbishop Eames. The talks process and the peace framework were not in competition, but the publicity given the Hume/Adams process had badly queered the pitch and made discussion of a Joint Declaration much more difficult.

The Taoiseach pointed out that the two governments had been talking about a declaration since long before the Hume/Adams initiative. There were common elements to all solutions and if all the elements in Hume/Adams were to be ruled out, then there could be no solution. Sir Robin Butler had told Mr. Nally on 10 November that the British position had not changed since his visit to Dublin in October: the principle of a declaration was ruled out, not just the

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text. There was a wide perception in Northern Ireland that peace was possible. It would be politically untenable north and south should a belief get out that peace was obtainable but that the British and Irish Governments had not seized it. The SDLP would be in serious trouble, and the stability of the Republic would come under threat. Mr. Lyne said that HMG were getting the message about peace from all sides. The Prime Minister was keen to seize the opportunity and might well appeal to people to do so in his Mansion House speech. The 10 November meeting had taken place before the Prime Minister had seen the Irish draft. He had since met several Northern Ireland party leaders and wanted to meet Archbishop Eames. Trust was essential and he wanted to preserve his personal relationship with the Taoiseach. But the problems over a Joint Declaration remained. We had to consider carefully whether it was time to test it and challenge the paramilitaries on either side.

The Taoiseach said that Mr. Alderdice had told him that Mr. Molyneux had told him (Alderdice) that he knew what was going on, and that he would neither support nor oppose it. All efforts by the Irish Government to get in touch with the UUP leadership had been rebuffed, though he had met many individual unionists (including the Reverend Roy Magee) and would continue to do so. Archbishop Eames had told him, after checking at his request, that 90 to 95 per cent of loyalists would stop violence within seven days if PIRA stopped, and the Reverend Magee had corroborated this. The Archbishop had told him he was "very happy" with the draft Declaration and would speak out in support of it in public with the Prime Minister. He had also promised to check it out with the Reverend Magee. What more authoritative sources could anyone have for unionist views? Time was not on our side. He would go for it alone if he had to and take the necessary risks, for domestic Irish political reasons.

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Mr. Lyne said that the Prime Minister wanted peace in Northern Ireland: the British interest in peace was massive. But long documents like the draft Declaration imposed constraints and the best deal might be one which accepted PIRA/Sinn Fein into the dialogue in exchange for a cessation of violence. The Taoiseach said vehemently that this meant unconditional surrender for PIRA, which was unrealistic. They needed some language in addition. Mr. Lyne said that language fully acceptable to HMG was one thing, but we could not accept words which were likely to drive the Unionists over the top. The Taoiseach said that he had made plain through intermediaries that he would have nothing to do with any text which did not include language on the Unionist right of consent. This amounted to self-determination within Northern Ireland, and once PIRA accepted that, they were finished politically. The important thing was to stop the violence, not worry about whether anything was being given up in words. PIRA could keep fighting for ever if necessary. People wanted peace, and if HMG argued about words, no-one would forgive them. Mr. OhUiginn interjected that the "moderates" (not his word) in PIRA needed language to persuade their hard-liners. There was also a problem of face. And it was fruitless to hope that PIRA could be persuaded to stop fighting in return for acceptance into a political structure they had rejected: that rejection was their *raison d'être*. We needed to understand their psychology and ideology. They could not give up fighting for nothing. If we failed to act now, the message to PIRA supporters would be that there was no alternative to violence. What would happen if it became known that HMG had rejected a text approved by Mr. Hume, the Irish Government and others? New myths and new hard-liners would arise, and the problem would be perpetuated. Mr. Lyne said that threats were not helpful. It was vital for the two Governments to work together. We would not make progress without each other. Mr. OhUiginn said he was

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warning of the consequences, not making a threat. Mr. Lyne said that HMG's problem was the possible expectation gap between what PIRA wanted and what HMG could offer. The Taoiseach repeated that Archbishop Eames' judgement showed that no gap existed.

Mr. Blatherwick asked what the Taoiseach would do were a draft Declaration put to PIRA and they rejected it? For example, would he publish the fact? The Taoiseach said several times, emphatically, that he was not interested in traps or hidden agendas. His sole interest was peace. There would be no forgiveness if we made people die because of words. Time was of the essence: every day made the task more difficult. Mr. Mansergh said that PIRA would think long and hard before they rejected the proposal: it would go down badly with their community. In reply to Mr. Lyne's comment that the Hume/Adams initiative nevertheless blighted the proposal, the Taoiseach repeated that the two governments could truthfully point out that they had been working on the idea before the Hume/Adams initiative, and had put Hume/Adams aside.

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Mr. Lyne asked whether PIRA might be persuaded to stop fighting before a Joint Declaration was made. The Taoiseach said with some heat that we could forget the idea: it would not run and he would not fiddle with it. If Archbishop Eames said something was okay, it was okay. He was not prepared to play games. He was in politics to get things done and if that proved impossible he could get out without regret. Over one hour had been spent going round the mulberry bush and all he heard was the negative message as given by Sir Robin Butler on 10 November - which incidentally differed markedly from what Sir Robin Butler had been telling Mr. Murray (the Secretary to the Government) earlier that week in Lisbon. Mr. Lyne said that the message was

From: S. J. Richards  
exactly the same. The peace framework proposal presented grave problems for HMG. But the door was not shut. The Prime Minister had not yet come to a decision, and would need to consult Cabinet colleagues in the next week before doing so.

The meeting ended amicably enough, with the Taoiseach saying how much he admired Unionists and looked forward to reading the Prime Minister's letter.

A few minutes after the meeting, Mr. Mansergh reported that the Taoiseach had read the Prime Minister's letter and wanted to make one point at once. This was that his letter to the Prime Minister should not be read as a threat to publicise their exchanges. The Taoiseach had simply intended to warn that in the nature of things, word was likely to seep out eventually.

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