

SECRET AND PERSONAL



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Roderic Lyne Esq CMG
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London

15 September 1993

Dear Roderic,

LETTER FROM THE TAOISEACH

Your minute of 8 September to Robin Butler asked me to provide a draft reply to the Taoiseach's Secret and Personal letter of 7 September to the Prime Minister.

I now attach a draft. This takes account of the meeting that Robin Butler and I had with Dermot Nally and Sean O hUiginn on 10 September following the Intergovernmental Conference that day, and further conversations over the weekend at the British Irish Association Conference in Cambridge between my Secretary of State and myself and Martin Mansergh, the Taoiseach's Special Adviser on this subject. You will want to look at the draft again, I suggest, in the light of the Prime Minister's meeting tomorrow with John Hume.

I will use the occasion of this letter, if I may, to note the key points of the meeting that Robin Butler and I had with Nally and O hUiginn on 10 September. They were these:

- (i) Robin Butler reported the Prime Minister's wish to be constructive in responding to the Taoiseach, but emphasised our clear judgement that the present text would not run as it stood. We would continue to provide views on the key issues and difficulties and suggestions on how the initiative might be made acceptable. We were not able to suggest textual

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amendments at this stage. However, we suggested that the Thomas/O hUiginn Liaison Group which was tasked at the IGC to address a joint framework document for political talks could usefully (in its margins) consider wording for that purpose which might also be relevant to the key difficulties in the Joint Declaration text;

- (ii) Nally said he had told the Taoiseach that the British response had been constructive. The Taoiseach now wished to come to a conclusion on whether the initiative could go ahead since time was not on its side. Nally then analysed the elements of the position of the two Governments as he saw them;
- (iii) Robin Butler pointed out the fundamental political questions which remained unresolved, in particular surrounding the British guarantee and the consent principle, and the connected issue of self-determination. The Prime Minister wished to react positively but the present text did not meet HMG's needs, and if the initiative was to prosper there must be changes in it. The work should not wait for the next Summit, hence the British suggestion of using the Heads of the Liaison Group for this purpose over the next 4-6 weeks;
- (iv) the meeting noted that John Hume would be raising the question of his own talks with Adams. O hUiginn reported that Hume was at the point of deciding whether to wind up those talks and if so on what basis, or press on. There might be a risk of Hume announcing that he had reached agreement with Adams and offering both Governments publicly the outcome of that work (perhaps in the form of something close to the 7th and superior though still unacceptable, text of the JD);
- (v) Nally and O hUiginn emphasised the Taoiseach's view that peace was possible through this initiative, and that substantive progress and settlement in the talks process could only follow the achievement of peace (and would be much helped by it). I said that HMG believed that the talks process was the first priority, as agreed by the Irish Government at the Intergovernmental Conference earlier that day and emphasised in the Joint Communiqué. But there was no need to make a choice at this point. Our suggestion was that work with the Irish Government on a joint framework document could serve both the talks process and the changes in the Joint Declaration text which would be necessary before the latter could become acceptable to HMG.

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I add for completeness that I have spoken to John Hume, on the telephone, since that meeting as well as to Martin Mansergh at the weekend. Neither is saying the text as it stands (whether JD6 or JD7) is unamendable but both emphasised the difficulty of doing so, and the limited window of opportunity both see for the initiative (as to which I am personally sceptical - Hume has been talking about peace with Adams since 1988, and we have seen the Provisionals return to the issue time and again in recent years).

I copying this letter and enclosure to Robin Butler and David Gillmore.

I agree with what you say about achievement of peace. A genuine and lasting end to violence in Northern Ireland would indeed be a historic breakthrough. The revolting sectarian killings by Loyalists recent days, and the continuing PIRA attacks, are just the latest reminders of what is at stake.

I am certainly prepared to work hard to find ways of advancing achievement of peace. As you know, I believe that any possibilities have to be examined and assessed very hard, and to see whether they will actually deliver the objectives which we both so much desire.

During our private discussion on 18 June, I said to you frankly that the text then before us would not run as it stood. In our judgement it would produce a backlash which would undermine any possibility of sustaining a cessation of violence, and I would have no hope of getting it through the House of Commons. But I was ready to agree without commitment that Sir Robin Butler and John Chilcot should meet Dermot Mally and Sean O hUiginn to explore the sort of principles which we might be able to consider. They have now had three meetings.

I am happy to continue to work with you for that work to continue, and the Liaison Group of officials which followed the Intergovernmental Conference on 10 September, now tasked to work on a Joint Framework Document for the talks, provides the opportunity. Its joint heads (and the other members) can use

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