



10 DOWNING STREET
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25 November 1993

THE PRIME MINISTER

John Major

Dear Albert,

It was good to talk to you last Saturday. I am sorry to have intruded on your weekend off. I hope that you and Kathleen were able to get some relaxation during your trip. If I may say so, I thought your interview with David Frost went very well.

Making no bones about it, we have had an extremely difficult and depressing week. I need not labour the reasons why. I had allowed myself to feel a little optimistic after my meeting with Robin Eames on 18 November. But I am afraid that the following day's leak and the Hume/Adams statement on Saturday last have had precisely the effect I feared when we spoke on the phone.

I have spent all week trying to repair the damage through a series of meetings and public statements. I fear that I have had only limited success. In the current political atmosphere, there is clearly no hope of securing even tacit acceptance by the Unionist mainstream of a Joint Declaration on the lines of your draft. The text would be seen as deriving from Hume/Adams, and thus would assumed to be the product of negotiation with Sinn Fein. This is an impression which successive statements from Hume and Adams have done nothing to dispel. As we have agreed all along, association with Hume/Adams is the kiss of death for any text intended to secure acceptance on both sides of the Community.

We need to finesse this difficulty. We must find another way of testing the ground for a cessation of violence. As we have gone so far with our work, and have the summit hard upon us, I do not think that we should abandon our efforts, despite this serious setback. Robin Butler will therefore be putting a proposal to you which results from my series of meetings this week and the most careful consideration at this end.

Robin will explain our thinking fully. You will see that the text incorporates much of the substance of the Joint Declaration, but in a different framework. This is a text which will certainly attract sharp criticism from many people in Northern Ireland. It goes as far as, in my judgment, the market will bear.

I believe that our proposal would meet the central objectives of both Governments, and would show whether there is a genuine chance of securing a cessation of violence. I hope that you will agree, and that we shall be able to issue the text as a joint statement after our summit meeting.

Yours Ever,
John

Mr Albert Reynolds, TD.

Detailed Comments

Mr Reynolds was shown a copy of the current text and read it carefully. He then made the following comments:

There was nothing such objectionable in the communication itself. He checked that paragraph 5 did not mean that Sinn Féin would enter the talks process on 3 December; the Secretary of State confirmed that it did not.