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JOINT DECLARATION INITIATIVE: LUNCH WITH MR MOLYNEAUX

The Secretary of State gave lunch to Mr Molyneux today in order to show him, following yesterday's meeting with the Prime Minister, the British text of a possible summit communique and statement on constitutional issues. Michael Ancram and I were also present.

Summary

In summary, Mr Molyneux indicated that he would give silent acquiescence to a text along the lines he was shown, subject to a few, mainly cosmetic, changes. He suggested it might be shown to Dr Paisley also, shortly before any public announcement.

Detailed Comments

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

- There was nothing much objectionable in the communique itself. He checked that paragraph 5 did not mean that Sinn Fein would enter the Talks process on 3 December: the Secretary of State confirmed that it did not.

- On the statement on constitutional issues, perhaps some of the references to "a majority" could be amended to "a greater number".
- Paragraph 2(b)(i) was rather "hackneyed": on its own, it could be read to imply a desire to get out of Northern Ireland as soon as possible. The Secretary of State suggested that it might be rephrased to open with a positive affirmation of the British Government's purpose in Northern Ireland before continuing with the "no selfish strategic or economic interest" formula.
- Paragraph 2(c)(ii) contained the necessary reference to "each part of Ireland", but it would be helpful if there could, in addition, be some reference to this being "in accordance with normal democratic principles".
- Paragraph 2(c)(iv) required amendment to avoid the impression that it might be referring to an all Ireland referendum.
- The reference in paragraph 2(d) to Nationalists pursuing their aspiration "from a basis of parity of esteem" was acceptable because of what the rest of the paragraph said about articles 2 and 3.
- In paragraph 2(e) the reference to "encourage" could be taken to include arm-twisting. The Secretary of State suggested, and Mr Molyneaux accepted, that the sentence should be amended to read: "The British Government, without

prejudice to the foregoing, would welcome the achievement by the people of the island of Ireland, North and South, of agreement"

- In paragraph 3(a) Mr Molyneaux was concerned that the opening sentence could be read to imply that continued direct rule had no legitimacy. An amendment to refer to "any new political system" would meet this.

- On the fifth sentence of paragraph 3(b) and the last sentence of paragraph 3(c) Mr Molyneaux said that he had no desire to insist that the Taoiseach made changes in the Republic which might run him into difficulties with, for example, the Catholic Church. These were two sentences which we might allow to be omitted if they caused the Taoiseach difficulty.

- He welcomed the penultimate sentence of paragraph 3(b) and noted that the opening sentence to paragraph 4 was harmless and in line with what had been said during the 1992 Talks.

Coming to the two alternatives at the end of the text, the Secretary of State explained that we might propose that the Taoiseach should drop the reference to the Irish Convention contained in the square bracketed paragraphs 5 and 6. Mr Molyneaux said this was the "old bogey": we would have got away with it if it were not for last week's Irish Press leak. But that, and its appearance in the Hume/Adams document, gave it a bad history. The convention would be associated with the completely unacceptable role given to the Inter-Governmental Conference in last week's leaked paper. It would raise far too many fears and suspicions.

Overall Attitude

Having come to the end of the document, the Secretary of State then asked whether something along these lines would meet with his tacit acceptance, or would cause him to expostulate. Mr Molyneaux said that, with the amendments he had suggested, it would not cause him to expostulate. He recognised that the Government had to take steps to ensure that it was not put in a position whereby the IRA could declare a temporary ceasefire over Christmas and say that it would be extended indefinitely if the British Government accepted certain terms. If the two Governments made this sort of statement, he would have to talk to his party and keep a grip on them, but he would tell them that the Government had had to use its head to ward off the threat of being out-manoeuvred by Mr Adams. It was helpful that the statement did not amount to a framework establishing new structures.

Mr Molyneaux wondered whether it might be possible to give Dr Paisley some idea of what the two Governments had in mind. There would be no need to show him the text and, indeed, he could not be relied upon to maintain confidentiality. But if, between tabling the paper with the Irish and any public announcement, the Prime Minister felt able to set the scene for Dr Paisley in a personal meeting, building on the trust which he seemed to have established in his meeting yesterday, that might help Dr Paisley rein in his wilder members. He had in mind that the Prime Minister could explain to Dr Paisley the risk of a scenario in which the IRA might declare a temporary ceasefire and ask the British Government for a positive response. The Prime Minister might then explain that he needed a degree of freedom of manoeuvre to ensure that the Government was not caught by this trap but, of course, he would always act within the confines of the sort of assurances he had given to Dr Paisley yesterday.

SPEAKING NOTE FOR PHONE CALL TO TAOISEACH

Thank you for your letter.

Action

I attach a revised version of the British text which reflects the points made by Mr Molyneaux and which has been approved by the Secretary of State. The way is now clear for Sir Robin Butler to convey this text to the Taoiseach, and I understand he will do so tomorrow.

My letter of 23 November provided a speaking note for Sir Robin's use with the Taoiseach. There are only two glosses which need be put on that:

- the attached text contains no reference to the Irish Convention in the light of Mr Molyneaux's comments, whereas the speaking note offered the Irish a choice. Sir Robin might refer to the difficulties expressed by Mr Molyneaux and explain that last week's Irish Press leak has tainted the convention unacceptably;
- Sir Robin might now say to the Irish that we have consulted Mr Molyneaux over this text. We did not ask him to endorse it but, after a few changes, he indicated silent acquiescence.

Copies of this letter goes to John Sawers and Melanie Leech.

SIGNED

JONATHAN STEPHENS