

SECRET AND PERSONAL

FROM: PUS
29 NOVEMBER 1993

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PS/SECRETARY OF STATE(L) [1]

IRISH GOVERNMENT: NEXT STEPS

The Secretary of State is to meet the Prime Minister and other colleagues at 6.00pm. The purpose is to discuss next steps with the Irish Government.

2. The Secretary of State will have had Mr Thomas's excellent draft of a unilateral British statement. That completes the set of alternative texts around which the meeting this evening, and the Summit if it takes place, will turn. The options are:

- (i) to return to the latest Irish version of the JD document, with us putting HMG's amendments to paragraph 4. This option could only take us forward if either
 - (a) today's statement or other events (an IRA or joint ceasefire) make a rejig of the JD tolerable to the Official Unionists. I regard this as a purely academic possibility;
 - (b) the Prime Minister and his colleagues decide it is better to plough ahead without the UU's support, reckoning they can hold the political position despite that and, even more important, hold the situation in the Unionist community in Northern Ireland. That requires, at a minimum, a strong probability of an end to violence quickly. The Irish Government themselves doubt that even their latest text will deliver;

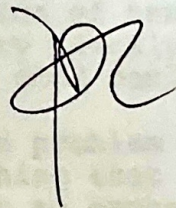
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- (ii) to press our joint communiqué concept and (with some room for amendment) text on the Irish Government. They may have little or no confidence it will work (but they do not and cannot have all that much confidence in a JD text to which we could conceivably subscribe). At least this would hold the two Governments together, challenge the Provisionals, and provide a platform for further efforts. It also restores the political development talks to their proper place;
- (iii) to make a unilateral statement (Mr Thomas's draft suggests how this might be expressed).

3. There is perhaps another variant. Our joint communiqué expressed the views of the two Governments in a single text, with a lot of attribution. We could suggest, and aim for, two parallel statements at the Summit, explicitly covered by a joint statement of aims - peace, democratic consent, an inclusive democratic process for political accommodation (including the constitutional issues, parity of esteem etc etc). This may not be so different from a joint communiqué - but it might prove easier to agree. And, of course, we could say it both adds to the pressure on the Provisionals while giving more time for the two Governments to find an agreed position. The Irish will say time is too short and the opportunity for peace too short-lived. We can argue, I think persuasively, the Provisionals keep coming back to the peace issues because the fundamentals require it.

4. In my judgement, we need a Summit anyway, since only that will test the Irish Governments' willingness to move from option (i) to option (ii) in paragraph 2 above. Expectations will heighten or fall to an exaggerated defence if the Summit is (long) postponed. And our position is much stronger after sending the Joint Communiqué and after the weekends revelations which, inter alia, demonstrate our persistent search for peace. Nothing can guarantee that the Irish Government will not pursue a unilateral (and self-defeating) line. But an evening call from the Prime Minister to the Taoiseach, followed by a Summit with this kind of agenda, is I believe our best way forward.



J A CHILCOT

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