

PRIME MINISTER'S TETE-A-TETE WITH THE TAOISEACH

Summary

- Attack consistent pattern of Irish Government leaks/briefing (cuttings attached);
- emphasise the need to carry both sides of the community in Northern Ireland: many turbulent factors and high risk of Hume/Adams contamination;
- reject Dublin briefing line that British version was no good and that it has been contemptuously rejected by the Irish Government;
- we are serious about the pursuit of peace. We have taken much bigger risks than Dublin. Our paper was a serious paper;
- dismiss continued moaning about a "disreputable" deal with the UUP. Molyneaux is a key player and both Governments have agreed on the need to carry the Unionists (and to offset the Loyalist paramilitary reaction);
- explain that progress on the peace initiative is possible. We should be able to reach agreement on a text, but only if it is certain to secure peace;
- complain about the absence of the promised paper on Talks. There was a joint commitment at the IGC held on 10 September on officials to work up a paper. The British side tabled a paper on 24 September. There has been no proper response (save for the leaked paper in the Irish Press on 19 November).

Points to make

1. We agreed in Brussels to carry forward the peace process and the Talks process. They are complementary. We want to press on with both.

2. The two Governments must work together, and be seen to be doing so. There have been a number of developments and distractions:

- Hume/Adams and their continued promotion of their "peace plan", despite our agreement in Brussels not to adopt or endorse it;
- the evident groundswell of support for Hume at your Ard Fheis (pronounced Ardesh);
- the Irish Press leak, on 19 November, of the draft Irish Government paper for the Talks Liaison Group;
- my own attempts to push things forward in my Guildhall Speech and elsewhere;
- increasingly public misunderstandings between the two of us not helped by,
 - disclosures of our own necessarily confidential indirect contacts with the Provisional Movement.

All that is in the past, and we need to look ahead.

3. We judge it important to keep up momentum on the Talks process, and be seen to be doing so. It is important whether or not peace is secured, and the prospect of political advance is another pressure on the Provisional Movement. We would like to

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receive the promised Irish Government draft paper. (There was a joint commitment to work on it at the IGC on 10 September.) Can we expect to do so? If not - and I can appreciate the difficulties after the mischievous and unauthorised leak of a draft of your paper, could the Liaison Group engage on the British draft. No doubt your officials (and mine) would be better equipped given the homework they must have been doing on the leaked draft. This is holding up Michael Ancram's bilateral work with the parties.

4. But we accept your view that our most urgent task is on the complementary peace process. I hope you will accept that I have taken considerable political risks in pushing things forward. Despite a good deal of scepticism about the Provisionals' intentions, I have maintained a commitment to the pursuit of peace. I have confirmed that we would meet Sinn Fein for exploratory dialogue after a relatively brief quarantine period. If they had stopped at the beginning of November we should have met them in mid-January. I have even secured Parliamentary and Press acceptance that it is right for us to have a confidential channel to the Provisionals, on the basis that it will not be used for substantive negotiation.

5. The British Government is ready in principle to make a Joint Declaration with you provided:

- we can agree a text

- you can assure me it would secure a renunciation of violence.

6. We need to look at text in detail, either now or when the others join us. But I need to register some preliminary points:

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- the build-up to this meeting, your own briefing, the Hume/Adams initiative and the revelations of our own contacts with the Provisionals puts strains on what the Unionists and, in turn, the Loyalist paramilitaries can take
- as you know we have consulted Mr Molyneaux. We have both talked to Archbishop Eames who has told us of his concerns that the idea of a permanent Irish Convention could not be sold in the North. It is a point on which Mr Molyneaux has particularly focussed
- the trailing of the meeting has come close to giving the appearance that in making a Joint Declaration both of us will be doing what we said in Brussels we would not do: namely offering a price for the cessation of violence
- your public trailing of the need for us to acknowledge the right of Irish self-determination, given the prominence which Hume/Adams gave to the same concept, has made it particularly difficult for us.

7. We have to recognise too that if any Joint Declaration we make works, in terms of securing peace, it is inevitable that both Hume and Adams will claim that it is the product of their own efforts. None of that will make it easier to sell in Northern Ireland, or indeed in Great Britain.

8. Nonetheless, despite the obvious political risks, and the dangers of a Unionist reaction, we are prepared to press ahead.

9. Despite your reaction to it the British Version which Robin Butler brought to Dublin last week was a serious effort on our part. It includes most of the substantive elements of your Joint Declaration, though not I acknowledge the permanent Irish

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Convention. It also contains much of your language, though some of it is organised in a different way. It contains almost all the language of paragraphs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9 of your Joint Declaration, as well as most of the elements of the crucial paragraph 4.

10. It is relevant that John Hume has told me that the heart of the matter is a few general concepts, most of which are in the British version. He mentioned in particular:

- acknowledgement that HMG has no selfish strategic or economic interest in retaining Northern Ireland within the UK against the wishes of its people;
- the right of the people of the island of Ireland to seek agreement on their future without the outcome being subject to veto by the British people, Parliament or Government;
- a commitment by both Governments to promote that agreement (but not, he emphasised, a promotion of agreement on a particular solution).

11. Our own text includes these ideas but in practice goes much further. It does include a reference to self-determination and a good deal of forward language in respect of stimulating agreement on the island of Ireland.

12. On the other hand, there are points on which we shall need to insist:

- the constitutional guarantee;
- some commitment on your side on Articles 2 and 3;

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- dropping the idea of the permanent Irish Convention, (we are ready instead to incorporate a reference to our willingness to enter exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein after a relatively brief quarantine period.)

13. The best way of settling the issues is to look at the text. Shall we turn to that now, with the others?

any previous discussions to recognise the traditions in the North.

- James stood by the amendments which he himself had previously proposed to the Joint Declaration.

- James continued to be concerned that - although the Irish Convention would lie within the Irish Government's jurisdiction - it could not be held in the North.

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