

F.J.D.

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FROM: J A Dew
British Embassy, Dublin

DATE: 14 January 1994

cc: PS/SofS-B
PS/Michael Ancram-B
PS/PUS-B
PS/Mr Fell-B
Mr Thomas-B
Mr Bell-B
Mr Watkins-B
Mr Williams-B
Mr Maccabe-B
Mr Daniell-B
Mr Rickard-B
Mr Archer, RID-B
Mr Brooker-B
Mr Wood (L&B)-B
Mr Caine-B
Mr Westmacott, Washington (by fax)

PUS/ 361
14 JAN 1994
R.I.C. LONDON

HMA
Mr McKervill o/r

JOINT DECLARATION FOLLOW-UP

1. I talked to Fergus Finlay (Tanaiste's Special Adviser) today.

Re-launching the Talks Process

2. Spring's positive remarks on television last night had been carefully planned. He would be repeating, and expanding, his call for an early resumption of talks over the next week or so. He was determined to seize the initiative from Sinn Fein, concerned that (at least as regards Irish public opinion and media) Sinn Fein appeared on the centre of the stage, with everyone else hanging on their every word. He wanted the two governments, and the Northern parties, to move centre stage quickly, and relegate Sinn Fein to the wings until and unless they delivered a cessation of violence. The Joint Declaration marked a major change in both governments' positions, and a new basis on which to work together, regardless of Sinn Fein's reaction.

3. But resuming the Talks Process had to mean more than Michael Ancram's discussions with the parties, essential as these were at this stage. Both governments had to be in the driving seat and there had to be something substantial to talk about. He fully agreed that this meant that we now needed to pick up substantive discussion quickly from where we had left off in the Liaison Group. The framework document needed to be revisited in light of the Joint Declaration, which already effectively covered Strand 3. He would be in touch with the Anglo-Irish Division accordingly. I told him that Mr Thomas had recently discussed this with Mr O hUiginn (news to Finlay).

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Public Statements

4. He asked if British Ministers could come out publicly behind Spring. I said that our Ministers would be taking the same line in the House of Commons debate on 21 January. (He clearly implied something even earlier would be helpful). The Irish had noted our move away from confrontational language. While it would be reasonable for us to address nationalist concerns a bit more, he hoped we would avoid any suggestion that we were running after Sinn Fein.

Section 31 Order

5. He agreed that the end of the Section 31 broadcasting Order made it even more important to take the initiative away from Sinn Fein - the prospect of waiting until their end February Ard Fheis, with televised regional meetings every week meanwhile, was intolerable. The Irish Government had appreciated our moderate public reaction over Section 31. They had been tempted to extend the Order for 3 months (as Ken Maginnis had privately pressed for), but this would have left the decision up to Sinn Fein. He thought that ending the ban would in practice bring Adams down to earth, removing his undeserved glamour.

Provisional Attitudes

6. In his view Sinn Fein were now simply trying to pull off a series of stunts, to cover their serious difficulty. He believed it was quite clear that Adams would not now be able to deliver the hard men, and would not (could not) split openly with them. They would decide against a cessation. There was no point in any false optimism.

US visa for Adams

7. He thought Adams would not apply again. I said that the Americans had been told that the Taoiseach was in favour of his getting one. He was surprised; there must be some misunderstanding. He doubted if there were divided counsels on the Irish side. The last time round the US had asked the Irish for their views; the Irish had said that they did not want him to have a US visa but that this had to be a purely US decision (ie they did not want to take any public responsibility for it). The Administration's subsequent letter to Dinkins had embarrassed them, and could account for even more hedged replies to recent US enquiries (which he knew had been made) about the Irish Government's attitude (see Dublin telno 21).

Contacts with Unionists

8. He implied that recent contact with the UUP had been more constructive than they had told me (my minute of 12 January).

Domestic Battles

9. Much of the Tanaiste's time would be taken up over the next week with a bitter argument over the Irish budget. There was money to give away, but the Department of Finance were stoutly resisting Labour's attempts to steer it into reducing the tax and PRSI burden on the lowest paid. Fianna Fail were standing aside. This was the sort of cause Labour supporters thought they were in power to fight.

Comment

10. A refreshing approach, and encouraging: Tanaiste-centric, in contrast to Martin Mansergh's line with the PUS yesterday. Spring needs early resumption of talks if he is to re-establish a personal profile on Northern Ireland, and is by nature inclined to impatience (even exasperation), not least at Provisional "stunts". Early public encouragement and approval from us for his pro-talks line would make sense. We should be able to follow up even in advance of the IGC, to get substantive work off to an early start.

(SIGNED)
J A Dew

1. By contrast with the position a week ago, Mr Roberts was very optimistic about the prospect for peace arising out of the Joint Declaration. The Provisional movement in the Derry area were largely signed up to this, though "a well signalled by the would create the necessary space".

2. Mr Loughran understood from that that the phrase "the Unionist veto" was uncomfortable. It was not necessary to readdress the text of the Joint Declaration, but a signal/indication from the British Government that it was not a Unionist veto as such but rather the democratic expression of the will of the people of Ireland in the North that was involved might well be helpful. The Taoiseach has used some such wording in his Irish Association speech (though as I received it - I have not had time to check - in terms of the agreement of the people of Ireland North and South that the wishes of the Protestant people of Northern Ireland could be set aside).

3. Mr Loughran said he should also report that the Provisional movement in Derry was thought to acknowledge that hard-liners in South Armagh, East Tyrone and in part West Belfast might not be of the same mind.

Signed:

JOHN CHILCOY

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