

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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LONDON

28 October 1993

MEETING WITH THE TAOISEACH ON 29 OCTOBER

I enclose for this meeting

- a draft Joint Statement, which HMA Dublin has put to the Irish Government
- points to make
- a separate note on developments in the Dail yesterday, including Spring's six principles
- a background note on the Northern Ireland Select Committee proposal
- copies of the recent speeches by the Taoiseach at Bodenstown on 17 October and by the Tanaiste in the Dail on 27 October.

Likely Irish preoccupations

Even in the aftermath of the Shankill bombing, and criticism of Adams for yesterday carrying the coffin of one of the bombers (Thomas Begley) the Taoiseach's starting position may be that an historic opportunity is being missed to bring about a PIRA cessation. He may still ask the Prime Minister to reconsider the British Government's position on the Joint Declaration, praying in aid a relatively positive response which we understand was given by Archbishop Eames when he was shown the Joint Declaration text in confidence by the Taoiseach. (The Taoiseach signalled to Sir Robin Butler his proposal to do this.)

The Irish Government are still privately annoyed with John Hume, especially for his statement of 25 September with Gerry Adams. But they have supported him publicly and will not want to leave him dangling. Although Irish officials have warned that achieving a soft landing may be difficult, the speeches yesterday by the

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Taoiseach and Tanaiste are broadly benign (see separate note). They suggest that the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach should be able to agree an approach and public line of the sort set out in our draft Joint Statement.

The Taoiseach may raise the reports that Mr Molyneaux will get a Northern Ireland Select Committee as part of the price for an alleged deal with him. He may also ask, in the light of Mr Molyneaux's statement on Monday, whether he has been shown the Joint Declaration: Sir Robin Butler has suggested a line on this which avoids breaching Privy Council terms.

Suggested approach

It now seems that the Taoiseach is unlikely to seek publicly to commend to the Prime Minister any report on the outcome of Hume/Adams. If necessary, this should be privately resisted, on the ground that the British Government would have to reject the report, and that this would unnecessarily create damaging differences between the two Governments. But this should not arise, since the Taoiseach said yesterday that "there can be no question of the two Governments simply adopting or endorsing the report of the Hume/Adams dialogue."

The approach we recommend is that the Prime Minister should invite the Taoiseach to give him an account of the outcome of the Hume/Adams dialogue, in the light of the Irish Government's own assessment. On the basis of this the Heads of Government could then re-affirm the key points in the draft Joint Statement. Hume would no longer be able to say that his initiative remained outstanding, but would have been let down lightly and encouraged back into the Talks, to which the Irish Government's commitment would also have been renewed. The Taoiseach would have the Prime Minister's private re-iteration of Sir Robin Butler's indication of our willingness to continue to explore any practicable prospects for peace, and some relevant but safe language in the Joint Statement. But this would be decoupled from Hume/Adams in a way which he should welcome. Some of the language in the attached draft statement is taken from the Taoiseach's Bodenstown speech of 17 October, a copy of which is enclosed.

It is possible that the Irish side, while accepting this broad approach, will want the Joint Statement to sign both Governments up to the six principles set out in the Tanaiste's speech yesterday. Principles 3-5 deal with Northern Ireland consent and the need for constitutional amendment in the Republic in a forward and helpful way. But first principle (Irish self-determination, subsequently qualified by Northern Ireland consent) should not be conceded by HMG in this context, and the sixth (place at the negotiating table if the killing stops) is too forward for our endorsement in this form. But the Prime Minister could say that the principles provide good food for further thought between the two Governments.

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Logistics

HMA Dublin has put the draft Joint Statement to the Irish Government. O hUiginn's immediate reaction was that paragraph 5 might be too negative for the Taoiseach, and that he might prefer separate speaking notes to a full Statement (although he acknowledged HMA's rehearsal of the possible attractions for the Taoiseach of a full and forward looking statement along these lines). We continue to think that a full statement would be greatly preferable. O hUiginn is consulting the Taoiseach but may not have any reaction to convey from him before the Prime Minister's party departs. He has also put to the Taoiseach the suggestion that the meeting might take place at the beginning of the afternoon session on Friday.

I am copying this letter and enclosures to John Sawers (FCO) and Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

JONATHAN STEPHENS

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