

**SECRET AND PERSONAL****DRAFT LETTER TO THE TAOISEACH**

**[FOR TRANSMISSION ON 27 OCTOBER - ? BY CONFIDENTIAL FAX THROUGH HM AMBASSADOR AT DUBLIN?]**

I am sure you will have had it in mind, as I have, to take a few minutes together in the margins of Friday's Special European Council for a word about Northern Ireland. I feel that this is all the more essential in the wake of the Shankill Road bomb and the other sectarian killings which have followed. We find ourselves in a tense and unpleasant situation, in which you and I will both wish to do whatever we can to calm things down and point the way forward. It is very helpful that we know each other so well, and have kept in such close touch on a private and personal basis.

Part of our problem is that great expectations are now riding on our encounter in Brussels, even though neither of us has said much about it in public. Indeed, knowing that we will see each other anyway, we have not even made fixed arrangements for the meeting.

Given the intense speculation, I think it is absolutely vital that we should be able to emerge from Brussels with an agreed outcome, so that we can brief the Press on parallel lines. As, inevitably, we shall not have a huge amount of time for our discussion, could we set our officials to work out in advance tomorrow, Thursday, the sort of position we could jointly take? If this strikes you as the right idea, as I hope it will. [John Chilcot will be standing ready to get together with Sean O hUiginn].

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What I have broadly in mind is that we might say that you had given an account of the report made to you by John Hume. You had expressed your Government's views on the report. I had made the point to you that any suggestions, to be successful, would have to attract the support of both communities in Northern Ireland. We had agreed that it was right to explore possibilities which could offer a serious prospect of a complete cessation of violence; we would of course remain open to any such proposals; but the outrage committed by the IRA last Saturday and the subsequent events had, self-evidently, made it impossible to look seriously at the outcome of the Hume/Adams talks. We could conclude by issuing a very strong statement on the imperative need for the cessation of violence so that political progress could be made.

This is only a broad indication of what I have in mind. Our officials would need to work up more precise formulations.

If you agree, I think that the best time for us to meet might be at the beginning of the afternoon session on Friday, leaving Douglas Hurd and Dick Spring to cover for us as the European Council starts to work through the draft conclusions.

I should be grateful if you could let me know how this strikes you. I would be happy to have a word on the telephone; or your officials might speak to Robin Butler or John Chilcot.