

FROM: D A L COOKE
SIL/TPU
22 OCTOBER 1993

cc PS/PUS (L) [2]
Mr Thomas [3]
Mr Deverell* [4]
Mr Rickard* [5]
Mr Beeton [6]
Mr May* [7]
Mr C Glyn-Jones+ [8]
PS/Sir Robin Butler+ [9]
Sir T Daunt+ [10]
File [11]

* Mufax via Liaison (L)
+ via Liaison (L)

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE, (L)
(Mr Stephens) [1]

JOINT DECLARATION

In the margins of yesterday's Liaison Group meeting in Dublin, Mr Thomas and Mr O hUiginn had a discussion about the Joint Declaration. I was the only other person present.

2. Mr O hUiginn had been with the Taoiseach after Sir Robin Butler had briefed the latter on the British side's position. Mr O hUiginn said that, while the Taoiseach had been grateful for Sir Robin's briefing, at which the atmosphere had been good, it was clear subsequently that the British side's news had been very badly received. (The Taoiseach's mood was further darkened by the concurrently unfolding political difficulties for the Irish Government over EC funds.)

3. The Taoiseach's attitude was that now we would never be able to test what had been a golden opportunity. The cycle of generations of the PIRA leadership would soon move on, so the opportunity might not recur quickly. The mistake which had been made would, in the Taoiseach's view, be evident in a year's time.

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Mr O hUiginn doubted whether the positive elements from Sir Robin's briefing had really registered with the Taoiseach. He said that the Taoiseach had brushed aside the intelligence assessment. The Taoiseach believed that much of the real explanation for the British position was Parliamentary arithmetic.

4. The Irish Government did indeed envisage that they would now privately and confidentially sound out Archbishop Eames. Mr O hUiginn thought the intention was to show him the Joint Declaration text. But the Taoiseach was not optimistic that anything would come of this.

5. Mr Thomas emphasised the way in which the Hume/Adams' statement of 25 September had heightened the difficulties. Our concerns about the loyalist reaction to even the most recent Joint Declaration text were entirely genuine, even allowing that it was difficult to predict the scale of such a reaction. I said that such a reaction could also, through targetting and provocation, make it hard for PIRA to sustain any cessation. Mr O hUiginn said the Irish Government had formed a clear view, based on an understanding of, although certainly not a sympathy for, the aspirations of the Provisionals, that the PIRA cessation would have been for real.

6. In subsequent discussion Mr O hUiginn, emphasising that he was not speaking on Ministerial directions, and for the most part was simply thinking aloud, made a number of observations. Not all of these were clearly compatible with each other. It became apparent that there were two conflicting strands in his personal response: a rational wish to minimise any damage and to go on working constructively with the British Government; and a more emotional sense of bitter disappointment, combined with a feeling that the Irish Government did not have much left to lose, and would get a good hearing in Washington and elsewhere. The main points (recorded in the order in which they were made) were these:

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- the Irish Government would be unlikely to do a "solo run" by making the Joint Declaration in the Irish Government's name only
- the Joint Declaration text would end up in the Irish Times, and probably sooner rather than later
- there would, Mr O hUiginn hoped, be no "negativism" on the part of the Irish Government. They would "do the best they could" on continuing the Talks process
- the Exclusion Order against Gerry Adams was inept and could be very damaging. The Provisional leadership would see it as a direct slap in the face over political movement [not a term used by Mr O hUiginn at any point]
- the prospects for re-engaging John Hume in the Talks process were not good. In these circumstances he would not want to "play devolution". He would be more likely to "go international"
- although the Irish Government were dejected at the British position, they believed political difficulties were part of the explanation. There was what might be termed "a timing problem". But the facts of life dictated that the two Governments were "condemned to co-operate" with each other
- John Hume had, and had retained, the version before last of the Joint Declaration text (probably JD11). He might be tempted to leak this. Any version leaked by the Provisionals would probably be an earlier version

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- the Taoiseach's private attitude was that he had managed the risk for the British Government and had picked up the flack. We were now saying that the game was not worth the candle. We were not prepared to make the necessary sacrifices. This was very disappointing. The Taoiseach would not be "vengeful" about the Talks process, but might be tougher in his attitude towards it. He was still convinced that peace had to come before talks, and not the other way round. (Mr Thomas questioned this, and pointed to the indications that the two previous rounds of Talks had contributed to political movement within the Provisional leadership)

- people (implying John Hume, but not just John Hume) would now want to "go to America." It was too early to say what the Irish Government's attitude would now be towards the peace envoy proposal. The likelihood was increased that the peace envoy would happen. We should not assume that there was just one model for such a mission. John Hume in Washington might say "This is what they refused". The Irish Government would have to defend itself.

7. Mr O hUiginn was not clear about when the Irish Government would debrief John Hume. I do not think he clearly said that neither John Hume nor the Provisionals would be debriefed until after 29 October, although this was perhaps the implication. He reiterated that life would be very difficult for Mr Hume, and that in his view there were no soft landings. He also thought that Mr Adams' position was now very difficult. Mr Thomas questioned this, pointing out that Mr Adams had eaten no words, silenced no guns, and gained a good deal of propaganda credit through association with Mr Hume. Mr O hUiginn acknowledged this, but seemed to be focussing more on the possibility that Adams and

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McGuinness would not remain the Provisional leaders for much longer. At the same time, he denied any knowledge of the inner workings of the Provisional leadership, saying he found it more profitable to regard this as a black box.

8. Mr Thomas, emphasising that he was speaking entirely without Ministerial instructions, put it to Mr O hUiginn that there were still be opportunities to be constructed in the political movement area. Anything like the Joint Declaration was probably now hopelessly compromised. But there were positive elements in it which could be disaggregated. Self-determination had been speculated about in the press, but the Irish Convention had not. The British Government had itself publicly stated a number of positive principles, for instance in the Coleraine speech. One possible option (although Ministers were not committed to it) would be a further speech by the British Government, building on some of the positive principles. More generally, anything more that was done on political movement probably needed to be decoupled from Hume/Adams, given the suspicions which their démarche had aroused. Mr O hUiginn conceded that a speech might be helpful, but would need to be carefully timed: it would do not good with the Provisionals if they were still smarting from the Adams Exclusion Order.

9. The meeting ended with a restatement by Mr Thomas of the British side's position. We maintained our long-term interest in political movement. We hoped that the immediate aftermath of the present Initiative could be handled sensitively and discreetly, with both Governments working very closely together. We were anxious to continue to share ideas. If it would be helpful, Sir Robin Butler would continue to be available to Mr Nally. We still wanted to capitalise on any shift of attitudes in the Provisional leadership. There were still a number of constructive elements from this point of view in possible public positions available to the British Government, although not in the sort of format

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envisaged in the Joint Declaration. The British Government did believe that the Talks process has an important part to play. It was vital that the two Governments should maintain their commitment to this process.

10. At the end of the meeting, Mr O hUiginn returned to musings about a scenario in which the Irish Government, taking the view that they had nothing to lose, went to Washington and elsewhere to brief about what had been on offer, what had been refused, and the advantages of a peace envoy. Mr Thomas reiterated our position on that. He asked Mr O hUiginn whether such an approach would really achieve anything constructive for Northern Ireland. Mr O hUiginn conceded that this was unlikely, and that in the end the Irish Government would sheepishly have to come back to the British Government to ask that the two Governments should work together again.

11. In the apparent battle between the vengeful and constructive daemons which seemed to run through a lot of the things Mr O hUiginn said, the latter at the end seemed to be re-asserting itself.

(SIGNED)

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