

DESK IMMEDIATE

FROM: TONY BEETON
TALKS PLANNING UNIT
6 DECEMBER 1993

cc Mr Cooke

MR THOMAS - B

FORWARD IRISH STATEMENTS ON ARTICLES 2 & 3

I attach a brief note containing relatively forward positions which Reynolds and Spring have taken on Articles 2 and 3. More time for research might turn up some other formulations, but they have both been studiously vague on the subject - especially in furnishing drafts for an amendment.

(SIGNED)

TONY BEETON
TALKS PLANNING UNIT
6 DECEMBER 1993
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IRISH POSITIONS ON ARTICLES 2 & 3

1. "Let me make my own position clear. I have never argued that Articles 2 and 3 of our Constitution should remain as is cast in bronze, incapable of change. Rather I have argued they should be seen as what they are - or, rather, what they were intended to be - part, and only part, of the constitutional description of our nation.

It is no longer a question of whether we 'could' or 'would' put an agreed package to the people in a referendum. We are pledged in our governmental programme to do so. But we clearly need to get around the table to work out how a generally acceptable package might fairly accommodate the deep divisions, including the positions on constitutional issues, which are the source of the conflict."

- Dick Spring, speech to the Irish Association at the Mansion House, Dublin, 5 March 1993

2. "As regards constitutional issues, the programme for a Partnership Government refers to the need for the final outcome of negotiations to be acceptable to the people, North and South. It further states that the Government will seek any necessary endorsement in a referendum for an agreed package, which would achieve a balance to accommodation of the different positions of the two main traditions on constitutional issues. There has been no change in the Government's position on this matter. A referendum would give the opportunity to all the people of this island to pronounce simultaneously on the form that future relationships might take on this island."

- Albert Reynolds, answer in the Dail, 6 October 1993

3. "There will be no unilateral change to Articles 2 and 3 but in the event of a balanced settlement emanating from the Talks process - which is a separate issue to this [the proposed Joint Statement] - the Irish Government would indeed put a referendum to the Irish people to bring about whatever changes are required in that situation."

- Albert Reynolds, interview with RTE, 5 December 1993

4. "The present commitment to a referendum is there. It hasn't changed. But if somebody wants it in writing, I don't have any problems with that. I don't see that it's absolutely necessary. But if it bridges the gap that is ok."

- Albert Reynolds, interview with RTE, 5 December 1993

... the Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland met with the Taoiseach and Minister for Justice. On our side, Sir Robin Butler, Mr Chilcot, Mr Thomas and RN Ambassador were present. On the Irish side, Mr Dalton, Mr Dorr, Mr Small, Mr O'Flaighin and other Irish officials were present.

Summary

Irish recriminations over the revelation of contacts between the Government and the IRA were answered. The Irish presented an optimistic assessment of the prospects for an end to PIRA violence, while we drew out the risk of a marked upsurge in loyalist violence if the unionist community saw it achieved on 'sell-out' terms.

British/IRA Contacts

The Taoiseach said that, having worked in good faith with us on an open basis, the Irish Government were very disconcerted to find that they had not been informed about ... which was in operation and which was

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