

SECRET AND PERSONAL



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Mr Thomas
→ Mr Cooke
Mr Beeton

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From the Private Secretary

3 December 1993

Dear Jonathan,

THE DUBLIN NON-SUMMIT, 3 DECEMBER 1993

This letter should be distributed only on a need to know basis.

After standing on the brink of cancellation in mid-week, and being downgraded by the Irish (if not by us) from a Summit, the working meeting with the Irish Government took place in Dublin Castle from 1100 to about 1900 on Friday 3 December. The Prime Minister was accompanied by your Secretary of State and by the Foreign Secretary. The Taoiseach was flanked by the Tanaiste and the Minister of Justice.

We began the day uncertain whether the initiative to produce a Joint Declaration with the Irish Government would survive it, under the tension of recent events. We ended still uncertain of eventual success, but with relations with the Irish Government patched up and agreement on a plan for further negotiations next week.

Northern Ireland was the only subject discussed during the day between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. I understand that a few other subjects were covered briefly during the separate session in the morning led by your Secretary of State and the Foreign Secretary.

Neither side pulled punches over recent differences about Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister spent the first half hour with the Taoiseach alone. I understand that they had a very frank exchange about grievances and misperceptions on both sides and that, for example, the Prime Minister took Albert Reynolds to task for briefing the press against us. (Perhaps the most conspicuous example of this was the Irish Times front page article of 2 December). Further clearing of the air took place over the following hour, when Michael Mansergh and I joined the meeting. I enclose a record.

Lunch was a good humoured social occasion for both delegations.

General discussion of the Joint Declaration exercise began in the parallel pre-lunch meetings. In the plenary meeting which began at 1500 with full

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delegations, the two teams went through JD14 paragraph by paragraph. The Irish side tabled a few amendments. The Prime Minister tabled a large number. You will be circulating a detailed account.

After a 40 minute break from 1630, the plenary resumed with smaller delegations. The Irish narrowed down the strong objections they had raised earlier to the UK amendments, focusing on four main points. They continued to argue that our amendments would destroy the balance carefully crafted in their text, and thereby vitiate its chances of provoking a PIRA cessation of violence. Differences of attitude were evident on the Irish side. The Taoiseach took a fairly hard line. Mrs. Geoghegan-Quinn (who had reportedly taken up an extreme position in the morning) smouldered darkly and silently. Sean O hUiggin ingenuously exposed the basic flaw in the Irish approach by arguing that the JD was designed only for the nationalist audience. The more balanced and moderate end of the spectrum was led by the Tanaiste (mainly through body language and occasional interjections) and by Dermot Nally. The meeting concluded that we had sufficient basis to continue with the exercise, and that the outstanding difficulties were serious but not insurmountable. It was agreed that the draft would be discussed in detail between officials at a Nally/Butler meeting in London on Monday 6 December, probably leading to a further review at the political level in the margins of the Brussels European Council (10/11 December). A separate note on this meeting is enclosed.

Finally, the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach held a joint press conference. No written statement was issued. The two Prime Ministers acknowledged that there had been frank talking about recent differences, and that there were important issues still to be resolved. They did not go into these issues, but committed themselves (at one point in synchronized speech) to continue working urgently for a successful outcome. The warm personal relationship between the two Prime Ministers was paraded before the cameras. The transcript of the press conference has been distributed separately.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jeremy Heywood (HM Treasury), Joan MacNaughton (Home Office), John Pitt-Brooke (Ministry of Defence), Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office) and, by fax, to David Blatherwick in Dublin.

*Yours ever,
Roderic*

RODERIC LYNE

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Northern Ireland Office