

NBPM

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FROM: PUS  
2 DECEMBER 1993

- cc. PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
- PS/Michael Ancram (L,B&DENI) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Cooke - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Rickard - B
- Mr Lyne, No.10

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

IRISH AMBASSADOR

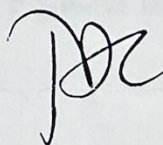
The Irish Ambassador called on me at his own request this morning (2 December), before going to Dublin to help with the briefing for tomorrow's working meeting.

2. His principal purpose was to urge me and the Northern Ireland Office to advise the British Government that now was the time for a bit of movement on our side on the constitutional issue to correspond to the movement that we rightly detected the Irish Government had made so as to secure the object of peace which shared. I said that the fundamentals of the British position were extremely well-known to the Irish side and insofar as they were fundamentals would not change. That did not exclude the possibility of seeking agreement on a Joint Statement and it was that approach that the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister had now settled on with a series of meetings starting tomorrow. The Ambassador looked disappointed.

3. He then offered his assessment of the disclosures of the contacts with the Provisionals through the link. He thought the Secretary of State's Statement on Monday was clearly a political success, and had strengthened the Government's position, thereby enabling them to take the necessary small risks required for the two Governments to align their positions (!). I said that the House of Commons had indeed supported the Secretary of State in a very welcome though not surprising way since there had been nothing to apologise for in what had been done. However, it would clearly put additional pressure on the Ulster Unionist Members from their own supporters and that would have to be weighed carefully. Opinion in Northern Ireland was clearly shaken by recent events and would need to be addressed sensitively over the coming days and weeks.

4. I reminded the Ambassador that the Prime Minister had now authorised officials to offer text to the Irish Government for a Joint Statement; and while until very recently it had not been possible for British officials to negotiate or barter the text of a Joint Declaration the Prime Minister had now shown he was ready to come forward with his own proposals as well as to engage in detailed two-way discussion on the Irish text. That opportunity should be exploited. The two leaders would doubtless want to give instructions at tomorrow's meeting for how the work was to be taken forward and over what period. Opportunities for further meetings arose in the European Council on 9 and 10 December, and potentially in a bilateral meeting between the two leaders on 13 December. The Ambassador emphasised what a political triumph for the Prime Minister it would be if peace could be secured; and the price to be paid was only a small one. I observed that our policy had historically opposed the concept of peace at any price, so the question was peace at what price. Fundamentals could not and would not change but if language could help we were in a position to take forward the search jointly with Irish colleagues.

5. Finally the Ambassador warned me that the Taoiseach had taken it very hard that while he had declared the Irish Government's indirect contacts with the Provisionals to the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister had not reciprocated. The revelations of the British exchanges with the Provisionals had kindled a high degree of anger. I observed that the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach had had lengthy opportunities on the telephone in recent days to share thoughts and feelings; and I took note. We ended as usual on cordial terms.



J A CHILCOT

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