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From : Alex Allan
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PRIME MINISTER

cc : Rod Lyne

NORTHERN IRELAND: TOM KING'S VISIT TO DUBLIN

Tom King debriefed me on his visit to Dublin.

He said there had initially been some irritation over the revelations of our contacts with PIRA. The particular nerve was that it was their job to talk to Irish nationalists, not the British. But this was calming down and there was no disposition to believe the PIRA version of the exchanges.

He said there was pressure from the younger MPs to put the onus entirely on you: it was all in your hands, and up to you to go the extra mile. But the wiser older heads - principally Brian Lenihan and Gerry Collins, whom he knows well - say there is no need to hurry; it is better to take things very steadily. There should be a series of meetings, and the pressure should be on the paramilitaries not you. Their advice to Reynolds is not to seek to force things on you.

Tom King said that he had used the leaked Irish document to probe what the Irish were after. His view was that the Irish were trying to resell to us the same concessions they had already made in the Anglo-Irish agreement. They wanted us to buy them a second time in exchange for further concessions by us. They had already conceded the consent principle in the Anglo-Irish agreement; equally, they had conceded the principle there of seeking changes to their

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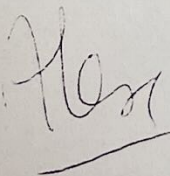
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fundamental law (ie Articles 2 and 3). Some official in the Foreign Ministry were wondering whether it wouldn't be better simply to aim to make the Anglo-Irish Agreement work properly. [This is presumably more in relation to the talks process than the joint declaration etc].

Tom King said there would undoubtedly be pressure for us to accept language involving "legitimacy" and "value". One approach he suggested was to insist in parallel that the Irish Government should accept the "legitimacy" of Northern Ireland remaining part of the United Kingdom if that is what the people there wanted. The Irish response to this was that it was already implicit in accepting the consent principle, but if so why could they not accept making it explicit?

On "value", there was a strand of Irish opinion which felt it was really for Irishmen to persuade Irishmen. The Unionists were not persuaded; it was other Irishmen's task to do the persuading. I think he said that John Hume had sometimes advanced this view.

He is very keen to be of help. He said that he might be able to speak more frankly to you than Paddy Mayhew or Douglas Hurd since he wasn't hemmed round with officials!



ALEX ALLAN

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