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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

1 December 1993

VISIT BY ARCHBISHOP EAMES TO DUBLIN

Distribution of this letter must be guarded very closely, and its contents should not be quoted to third parties.

Archbishop Eames telephoned me on the morning of 1 December.

He had spent 90 minutes with the Taoiseach. Reynolds had been adamant that the British draft joint statement was a non-starter. He had also insisted that the Joint Declaration had to include the proposal for an Irish Convention. With that proviso, he was prepared to import some of the language of our draft into his text. He had said that if, nevertheless, we tried to push our document, the summit would not be fruitful. He was, of course, prepared to adjust phrases in his paper.

Eames had been consoled in the knowledge that the "tennis match leaks" had now reached deuce. I commented that this was incorrect unless one assumed that the IRA leak had come from us - which was of course palpably untrue.

Reverting to the Convention, Eames said Reynolds was convinced that the Convention proposal would have an important impact on PIRA. Eames had advised Reynolds that even moderate Unionists would be opposed to the Convention. They would see it as an idea stemming from the Hume/Adams dialogue. Eames had warned that if Reynolds stuck to this idea, he would fail to carry the British Government with him. Eames said that he had expressed himself in very blunt terms. But he had to report that Reynolds was obsessed with the notion that the Convention would sell the Joint Declaration to PIRA. Reynolds had argued that he did not have to take account of the views of Unionists on the Convention. It was none of their business. The Convention would lie entirely within his jurisdiction. Eames had said that he would be

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dismayed if this remained the Taoiseach's position. But the Taoiseach had replied that the Convention was non-negotiable.

I told Eames that I expected the Prime Minister to stand firmly against the Convention. We shared his impression that it would arouse deep suspicion among Unionists, especially after the Irish leak.

Commenting on the meeting, Eames said that he had known Reynolds for a long time. We had to remember that we were dealing with someone who found certain concepts intellectually difficult; who was still essentially a wheeler dealer; and who habitually framed his questions to his advisers in a way designed to elicit the answer he wanted.

I asked the Archbishop if the Prime Minister would be able to quote Eames' views to the Taoiseach if - as was entirely possible - Reynolds gave his own characterisation of the Archbishop's position. Speaking with care, Eames replied that he would be fully content for the Prime Minister to say that Eames had told him the following:

- Eames considered that Albert Reynolds had gone further than any previous Taoiseach to recognise the traditions in the North.
- Eames stood by the amendments which he himself had previously proposed to the Joint Declaration.
- Eames continued to be concerned that - although the Irish Convention would lie within the Irish Government's jurisdiction - it could not be sold in the North.

Finally, Eames commented that Reynolds was very keen to make progress, but was not entirely convinced that the same applied to us.

In conversation later in the day, Martin Mansergh made an unsolicited comment on the meeting with Eames. Mansergh said that it had gone very well. Eames was prepared to be as helpful as possible. Eames had also voiced the suspicion that Jim Molyneaux was taking advice from Enoch Powell.

Comment

Could you please integrate the approved description of Eames' position given above into your briefing for the Prime Minister's talks with the Taoiseach on Friday?

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Yet again, we face the problem of widely differing accounts of a meeting between Eames and Reynolds. But it is helpful that Eames has explicitly allowed us to say that he is opposed to the Convention.

It is hard to tell whether Reynolds was merely taking an extreme line with Eames as part of his tactical softening up of the British before the Friday summit; or whether Reynolds is less of a tactician than we might suspect and is - as Eames credibly suggests - a man obsessed. It will be very useful if the Foreign Secretary can obtain some cross bearings from the Tanaiste during their proposed bilateral meeting in Brussels tomorrow.

I am copying this letter to John Sawers (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and to Melanie Leech (Cabinet Office).

RODERIC LYNE

Jonathan Stephens Esq
Northern Ireland Office