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From: HMA
Date: 31 January 1991
cc: Mr Chilcot
Mr Pilling
PS/SOSNI
Mr Archer
A/DHM

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

CALL ON THE TAOISEACH

1. The Taoiseach and the Foreign Minister had a long private talk this morning about political development. Both Mr Nally and Mr Dorr expect Mr Collins to be present when you call on Mr Haughey - but neither is absolutely certain.
2. I asked Mr Nally whether the Taoiseach would have in mind the longer-term aspects of our recent conversation (paragraphs 5 and 7 of my minute attached). Mr Nally said that these matters were in the back of the Taoiseach's mind. He would take them into account in the way he presented his views but he did not know whether Mr Haughey would address them explicitly. He stressed again that in his conversation with me he had reflected very tentative thinking on a very personal basis.
3. For his part, Mr Dorr thought that the meeting might address the question, "Where are we going?" The central issue was the Christmas Eve paper and the Irish reaction to it - but these might be addressed "in the wider context of other things".
4. In the Dail yesterday the Taoiseach said that "We support the initiative and very much want it to succeed... At this stage I would be hopeful rather than confident". If the talks failed "I would not be at all despondent... We have to have regard to the reality of the situation" (fuller report attached in Mr Fergusson's letter of 30 January to Mr Cooke).
5. I draw three conclusions:

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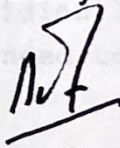
(a) In public, Mr Haughey presents himself as fully co-operative but is preparing the ground for failure. He knows he must expect sharp criticism in the Dail in that event.

(b) He is very likely to mention the longer-term prospects and may outline the tentative shape of his grand design in order to tempt you away from pressing too hard your current proposals.

(c) You should nonetheless begin by firmly commending to him the Christmas Eve paper on the lines of Mr Hill's "bull points". The Taoiseach will expect this and it may elicit a usefully direct presentation of his thinking.

6. I shall be interested afterwards in your impressions of Mr Haughey's state of health.

7. The Sinn Fein's Ard Fheis meets in Dublin on 2-3 February.



Nicholas Fenn