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*Mr. Molyneux
10.12.90*

SECRET



Telephone conversation with Jim Molyneux
17th November, 1990

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1. I telephoned Jim Molyneux at his home in Antrim over the weekend to sound him out, as instructed, on the possibility of his attending the Presidential inauguration in Dublin Castle on the 3rd December. Mr. Molyneux was very friendly and invited me to join him for a meal or a drink when I was next in London. He mentioned that he himself was leaving for Australia in December - to visit relations and attend a family wedding - and would be away for about a month.

Presidential Inauguration

2. Mr. Molyneux said that he very much appreciated the Taoiseach sounding him out on whether he would wish to be invited to the Presidential inauguration. The reality was that he would not feel able to attend in person but, if this were acceptable to us, he would almost certainly be prepared to break with his party's approach in the past and nominate someone - probably Ken Maginnis - to represent him. If we wished to go ahead with an invitation therefore, and subject to discussion with two or three close colleagues, he would respond by regretfully declining (due to a "previous commitment") but would nominate Ken Maginnis to attend in his place.

Invitation to Ian Paisley

3. I asked Molyneux for his personal advice on the best approach to take to sounding out Ian Paisley about possible attendance at the inauguration. He replied that Paisley was in a "mood for stampeding at the moment" and there was a danger that any invitation or sounding out would be "flung

back in your face". He advised, therefore, that we avoid direct contact with Paisley and instead sound him out through one of our MEPs.

Prospects for talks

4. In reply to my question about his assessment of the current state of the political talks process, Molyneaux said that they were "going nowhere fast". He emphasised - and came back to this point on two or three occasions during our conversation - that he would not wish us to be "anguishing over the substantial progress issue" in the hope that a resolution of this problem was all that was required. Substantial progress had been the major problem in July but since then John Hume had "pushed the boat out further" through omitting all references to the UK in his alternative document (i.e. the text Hume drafted as an alternative to the Secretary of State's 5th July statement). Molyneaux said that the Hume text seemed to assume that Northern Ireland was out of the UK - this was clearly not the case and "for the time being, for better or worse, any new structures would have to be within the UK, with a link with the Republic". He added that, even if internal talks had got under way, "John would rabbit on and we would have got nowhere by two or three weeks".
5. Molyneaux went on to say that the more he saw and heard of "the whole thing", the more pessimistic he became "about arriving at a working system in the internal talks". This was not Dublin's fault; most of the pressure for "internal movement" came from people in the DUP such as Sammy Wilson and Peter Robinson who were hyping the issue and making "blackguarding allegations" about the bona fides of the other parties. (I took this to be a reference to recent thinly-veiled DUP criticism that Molyneaux was not really serious about the talks process and had to be dragged along

at various stages by Paisley). He was also quite critical of the NIO and said that there appeared to be "two or three mafias operating there, giving conflicting signals and pulling in different directions".

Address to Unionist Conference

6. Molyneaux then referred to his address to the Annual Conference of the Unionist party. He said that, while there were strong criticisms of Dublin in the text, we should understand that these were politically necessary. At the same time, he had made some positive references to the Taoiseach - indeed, coming away from the Conference, he had reflected to himself that if one of his predecessors had spoken in such terms, he would have been "lynched before he got out of the building".
7. The reason he had gone back to the 1980 totality of relations approach in his address - and he would wish the Taoiseach to be made aware of this - was that he believed that we should "genuinely focus on the major issues and stop funnelling and narrowing things into the internal government area". If this approach had been followed, and if we had "started at the other end", the question of "closing you out would not have arisen".

Comment

8. This conversation was further and indeed complete confirmation of our view that Molyneaux has no interest in - indeed is resolutely opposed to - the British/DUP objective of establishing a devolved administration in the North. By implication, Molyneaux is suggesting that there is a commonality of interest between Dublin and the OUP - in the sense that we share a desire to move to a wider agenda and focus on the "major issues".

9. It is perfectly clear however that, even if Molyneaux refers approvingly to the "totality of relationships", his interpretation of this concept is radically different from our own. Molyneaux's real interest lies in moving Northern Ireland into a more integrated relationship with the UK (e.g. through a Select Committee for Northern Ireland legislation at Westminster), while at the same time seeking to have the Anglo-Irish Agreement replaced with a loose and general "neighbourly type" North-South arrangement. For us, the "wider agenda" essentially means an all-island context; for Molyneaux the East-West relationship is the prism through which all the other relationships are seen. With such a fundamental difference in approach, it must be highly doubtful whether - despite Molyneaux's friendliness of tone - there is any genuine prospect during his leadership for developing a meaningful dialogue between the OUP and ourselves.

DAG.

Dermot Gallagher,
19 November, 1990.

cc: PST, PSM; Mr. Nally; PSS: Mr. Mathews; Mr. Brosnan;
Counsellors A-I; Box.