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Taoiseach,

Political Progress on Northern Ireland


As discussed with you on the plane from Paris on Wednesday (and mentioned by our Minister at an earlier meeting with you) I enclose herewith a draft of a possible document which we might wish to put forward at some point.

The aim of putting forward a text would be to ensure that further discussion, if any, would be on the basis of our draft rather than, as hitherto, on the basis of British papers. It might also make our position clearer to have a text of our own drafting to stand on in case talks come to an end.

The draft is phrased as a document which could itself be the basis for talks rather than as a "document about a document" on the lines of recent British papers. There is no "magic solution" to the "substantial progress" problem but simply an effort to draw the various available elements together in a reasonably coherent way.

I do not suggest that you offer this - or any alternative text - to Mr. Brooke when you meet him on Monday. I agree with the note prepared by Dermot Gallagher on the political aspects of that meeting. It seems to me that it would be in our interest at this stage that that should not be a "make or break" occasion - both because this could create the idea that Dublin was "responsible" for any breakdown and because of the uncertainty which must arise from the change of Prime Minister (and possibly Secretary of State ?) in London.

You might therefore want to consider saying to Mr. Brooke (if only as a way of drawing things out) that we would be offering them a paper within a few days (whether the present draft or some other document). (You might also want to consider whether any use could be made at that point of the channel through Dermot Gallagher to Mr. Molyneux to establish more directly just what the latter might agree to ?)


N Dorr
DFA
23 November 1990

cc. PSM, Mr. Nally, A/Sec Gallagher

Draft

23 November 1990 (ND)

I

1. The two Governments would be prepared to consider a new and more broadly based agreement or structure transcending the present Anglo-Irish Agreement if such an arrangement can be arrived at through direct discussion and negotiation between all of the parties concerned.
2. To allow an opportunity for such a wider political dialogue the two Governments have decided not to hold a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference in the period between x and y.
3. Since the Conference will not be meeting between x and y it will not be necessary for the Secretariat established under Articles 3 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to carry out the particular function assigned to it in that Article of servicing meetings of the Conference during that period.
4. All of the parties concerned will make use of this interval for comprehensive and open-ended discussions in order to establish if such a wider and more comprehensive agreement can be achieved.

II

5. The parties to such discussions will be the two Governments and the four constitutional, democratic parties in Northern Ireland - OUP, DUP, SDLP and Alliance.

(Possible addition)

- [5a. The aim of all concerned is to seek as broadly-based an agreement as possible. They are at one however in their firm belief that parties which support violence in pursuit of political aims are not acceptable as partners in democratic dialogue so long as they maintain that position.]

6. It is common ground between the parties that hope of achieving a new and more comprehensive agreement to transcend the present Anglo-Irish Agreement rests on finding a way to give adequate expression, through appropriate structures to the totality of relations between the peoples of Britain and Ireland.

7. In particular they agree that discussions must focus on three main inter-locking relationships: between the communities in Northern Ireland; between North and South in the island of Ireland; and between the peoples of both islands [between Britain and Ireland] [between the two sovereign Governments].

[7a. In the North/South talks each of the Northern Ireland parties will decide whether to attend in its own right or as part of a delegation led by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Any party which opts for the latter approach, will, nevertheless, be entitled to speak in its own right and to state its own position in the course of the talks.]

(Note para 7a would be included only when and if it is decided to compromise on this point)

8. Talks will accordingly, take place in three formations corresponding respectively to these three main relationships:-

(a) Northern Ireland

Representatives of the four main democratic parties will meet under the Chairmanship of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

(b) North/South

Talks will be between representatives of the four Northern Ireland parties, the Secretary of State for NI and the Irish Government.

III

12. As a first step towards getting parallel discussions underway in all three formations talks will begin between the parties in Northern Ireland under the Chairmanship of the Secretary of State.
13. These talks like the other talks to follow, will be intensive and all concerned will participate in good faith. It is envisaged that they will continue over a period of some three to four weeks before other discussions begin, in order to allow all of the issues which arise for the participants in that formation to be fully identified and fully aired.
14. Because of the bearing which these issues may have on issues arising in the other two frameworks, it will be necessary to get North/South and East/West discussions under way in parallel thereafter if full use is to be made of the interval so that an overall agreement satisfactory to all may be achieved.
- [14a. The precise date for the opening of North/South and East/West talks respectively will be determined in agreement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Irish Government, following consultations between the Secretary of State and the parties in Northern Ireland.]

- (c) Talks will be between the British and the Irish Governments. Representatives of the Northern Ireland parties may attend as observers if they so wish.

9. In order to ensure a full airing of the issues the talks to take place in each of these formations will be without pre-conditions as to subject matter. It will be open to each of the parties to raise any aspect of these relationships [including constitutional issues] or any other matter which it considers relevant. It will be for the participants in each formation to decide on the order in which to take up agenda items for discussion.
10. Once talks get under way they will be intensive. All parties will participate actively and in good faith from the outset in order to make substantial and speedy progress.
11. It is accepted by all concerned that any agreement which may be reached on any one aspect will be dependent on agreement by all parties on the overall outcome of the discussions.