

File
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FROM: HM AMBASSADOR DUBLIN

Date: 11 October 1991

cc (by BLIS):
 PS/SofS (L&B)
 PS/Min of State (L&B)
 PS/PUS (L&B)
 PS/Mr Fell
 Mr Ledlie
 Mr Bell
 Mr Alston
 Mr McNeill
 Mr Hill
 Mr Archer, RID, FCO
 Mr Gowan, Cabinet Office
 (via RID)

14/10

a Mr Haffington

MR THOMAS, NIO(L) - B

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: IGC, 17 OCTOBER

1. I had hoped to attend the briefing for the IGC on 15 October: to my great regret, I have two engagements which I simply cannot break. I am therefore putting on paper one or two thoughts to complement David Hill's brief (his minute of 11 October to PS/Secretary of State).

2. First, the fact that Mr Brooke will not now be seeing the Unionists until 7 November will put a very different complexion on the IGC in Irish eyes from that envisaged at the last meeting. The expectation then was that Mr Brooke would have seen the Unionists by the time he next saw Mr Collins, and that the IGC next week would provide an opportunity to go over Unionist views before taking things forward. Like everyone else, the Irish see the Unionists as the crucial party in the bid to restart talks. They acknowledge that if the Unionists were to agree to come to the table tomorrow on the terms previously

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agreed, they, the SDLP and everyone else would be mightily pleased to concur. They are suspicious of the Unionists and will be cautious not to give much away before the Unionist position is known. They will need some reassurance that the delay in seeing the Unionists is really a consequence of Dr Paisley's timetable, not some subtle British delaying ploy; and (whether it is the case or not) that we have tried hard to get the Unionists to the table earlier.

3. Secondly, the Irish will probably want us to be seen to be making a determined effort to bring about fresh talks (Mr Hill's minute of 11 October to Mr Bell - not to all) not only because they support the political process, but because they too have a major tactical interest in visible activity. If political development were to be seen to falter too far in advance of the British General Election, they would be under pressure to develop an alternative policy, which could only be the Taoiseach's proposals to solve it all between the two Governments. This is an extra tactical reason for us to keep the ball moving. In effect, there is a trade-off: the more we can talk about political development with the Irish, the longer we can stave off the Taoiseach's ideas. If the Prime Minister is to deflect the Taoiseach from using the summit to air his ideas, he will need to be able to point persuasively to an existing viable policy.

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4. In brief, we should not expect the Irish to be forthcoming at the IGC on 17 October. And we should do what we can to persuade the Irish that despite the delays over meeting the Unionists, the show is getting on the road and will soon be visibly so.

(Signed)

D E S Blatherwick

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