

Anglo Irish
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TPU
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sn/ss

C

- cc: PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
- PS/PUS (L&B) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr T Smyth - B
- HMA Dublin - B
- Mr Lamont, RID - B

64/4
19 APR 1995
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PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B) - B

Wm [signature] 20/4

IRISH REACTION TO ANNOUNCEMENT OF BILATERALS

Mr Williams' note of 13 April reviewed the warnings that we had received, or not received, about the Irish view of any possible announcement by the Secretary of State. I have not myself seen a record of quite how vehement the Taoiseach was, but I share Mr Williams' conclusion that Irish officials did not warn of quite such strong concern as he appears to have expressed.

2. I think two reasons may account for the Taoiseach's vehemence:

- the most important may have been that Ministers had still not joined exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein. When we spoke to Irish officials in the Liaison Group last Thursday, they (and we) might reasonably have hoped that it would have been possible to achieve this before yesterday evening. We know that after the Liaison Group Mr O'hUiginn offered his own drafts to Sinn Fein as a possible basis, and had them rejected. It is likely therefore that Irish concern only rose to alarm level when, at the last moment, they realised that the announcement would go ahead before Ministers had joined exploratory dialogue;

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- there is always Irish concern - fueled by age-old paranoia and mistrust - that the British Government is about to "go it alone" and pursue some form of internal settlement. I suspect this added to their concerns.

3. As it happens, and on the basis of the text of the speech as delivered, I think all has come out well. We have announced bilaterals. We have also, effectively, pointed the way for Sinn Fein to join a bilateral process, through exploratory dialogue - if only they can accept the basis for Ministerial participation in exploratory dialogue. Combined with the letter we are now sending Sinn Fein this evening, that offers an attractive mixture of stick and carrot.

4. This episode does, however, demonstrate Irish sensitivities. With that in mind, I think it would be sensible to re-visit the decision to show our draft "agenda of issues" to the Irish Government only after it has been shown to the parties (Miss Harrison's note of 12 April).

5. These bilaterals will be taking forward the Talks process - as currently constituted, that process has six participants, including the Irish Government. On any analysis, they are therefore entitled to receive a copy of the draft agenda at the same time as the four parties because they are as much a participant as any of the four parties.

6. But there are also advantages in showing the Irish Government a copy in advance:

- they are directly concerned, in as much as the agenda of issues is intended to build on "Frameworks", of which in part they were a joint author;

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- we have effectively managed the Talks process throughout jointly with the Irish Government, recognising that their active support is necessary for a successful conclusion. We rarely gain from trying to cut them out of the process;
- on the other hand, their active support can be helpful in moving the process forward, not least in putting pressure on the SDLP who can otherwise be exceptionally hard to pin down;
- as regards Strand II in particular, the Irish Government has a very direct interest in what is put to the Northern Ireland parties - Strand II is essentially a negotiation between the Irish Government and the four Northern Ireland parties. The British Government is of course a participant but is not expected to be involved in any North/South structures which emerge.

7. My own view is that these considerations point to showing the Irish Government our draft agenda of issues in advance, in order to sign them up to the overall approach. Unionist anxieties focus primarily on any involvement by the Irish Government in Strand I - Strands II&III cannot, of course, be resolved without the involvement of the Irish Government. One way forward might therefore be to show the Irish Government in advance the agenda of issues for Strands II and III only, explaining that we will show them Strand I at the same time as the whole package is shown to the party. (It has always been accepted that the Irish Government must be involved, as part of any overall agreement, in endorsing Strand I along with Strands II and III).

8. With the same sensitivities in mind, I also suggest we delete the first indent under "North/South Institutions" in the draft agenda of issues which Miss Harrison submitted on 12 April. When the Irish see it - whether from us or the SDLP - it will only play

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to their fears that we are ready to contemplate a solution which does not include North/South institutions. The reality is that they are essential to any overall settlement.

SIGNED

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