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OIFIG AN TÁNAISTE AGUS AN AIRE GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
OFFICE OF THE TÁNAISTE AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

6 January, 1994.

cc PSS, *Fitz*
Finnerty
Manning
Jean Se
John Lee
T Dalton
Counsellors

RH

The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP,
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland,
Stormont Castle,
Belfast BT4 3ST.

Dear Patrick,

Thank you for your letter of 5 January and very kind New Year greetings. I wish you and all your team every happiness and success in 1994, and look forward to continuing our very close contacts.

I agree completely with you that there can be no question of the Governments ceding the initiative to the Provisional movement. However, for the present I think the onus is very much on that group to respond to the initiative taken by our two Governments. Our immediate focus must be to encourage a positive response. For that reason I feel we should be sensitive, both in terms of timing and presentation, in our discussion of future political developments. I would be anxious to avoid anything which might imply we were already jumping to negative conclusions about the Sinn Fein response to the Declaration, without giving some reasonable space for a process of reflection and consultation, which we both accept may require some time.

I will reflect very carefully on the points you raised in your letter and look forward to a full discussion of them at our Conference later this month.

With warmest good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Dick Spring, T. O.,
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Dick Spring TD
Tánaiste
Department of Foreign Affairs
DUBLIN

5 January 1994

Dear Dick

THE JOINT DECLARATION AND THE TALKS PROCESS

May I wish you, and all your colleagues, a happy and successful New Year! I look forward to continuing our shared work in 1994, and to our meeting (if not before) at the Conference now arranged for 26 January.

I should like in the meantime to canvas the way forward on political development, following the Joint Declaration. The Joint Declaration's reception overall has so far probably been as good as we could realistically have expected, even though in respect of the Provisional Movement it has of course so far fallen short of what we hoped. There may yet be a positive response, though there are some signs that the Provisionals have the stomach neither to accept it nor reject it. There will no doubt be further manoeuvres to try to raise diversionary issues, to bargain in advance of a cessation of violence, to divide the two Governments, and to recruit John Hume. It is possible a clear response will never be received, save through events on the ground, and these have disappointingly, and very gallingly, included since Christmas more murder, attempted murder, and extremely costly destruction.

In any event I believe our two Governments should demonstrate business as usual. In particular, progress in the Talks will apply a real additional pressure on the Provisionals, as well as being highly desirable in its own right. It would, in my belief, be damaging and dangerous for us to allow the Provisional Movement to seem to hold the initiative, by delaying or appearing to delay further political moves while they continued, or pretended to continue, the process of reflection and consultation on the Joint Declaration.

As the Taoiseach has suggested publicly, we may need to intensify our work on security co-operation. As you know, we have a detailed programme of work on that. We shall want to discuss this at the IGC.

But my immediate concern is with the Talks process. Both Governments, though recently concentrating for obvious reasons on the Joint Declaration, have repeatedly stressed that the Talks Process is urgent and vital and that its objectives are valid and achievable. I believe that it is important that both Governments, though having made it clear that there is a route open to Sinn Fein, should demonstrate that they are ready to press on.

In a number of ways the Joint Declaration, though focussed on what we agreed to regard as a complementary "peace process", itself makes a significant contribution to the Talks, and to

their prospects. In setting out the constitutional principles and political realities which safeguard the vital interests of both sides of the community in Northern Ireland, it underpins the work we had in hand in respect of the Talks. We have noted, with appreciation, the Taoiseach's judgement in the Dail:

"I do not know of any fairer statement that has been or could be made by the British Government with regard to nationalist ideals than what is set out in paragraph 4 of the Joint Declaration. John Hume has correctly described it as the most comprehensive statement by a British Government on British-Irish relations in 70 years. I also believe the Irish Government have gone further than in any previous formal statement towards meeting unionist fears and concerns".

We also have welcomed your Government's sensitive efforts to consult Dr Alderdice, Ulster Unionists and other opinion formers in Northern Ireland and your generous acknowledgement of their resulting contribution.

The Declaration may even, in a paradox typical of the process, have helped to re-engage the DUP. When Dr Paisley met the Prime Minister on 22 December, with the other party leaders, his fulminations about the Declaration preceded an assertion that he would participate in the Talks Process, provided it was on the basis of the 26 March 1991 statement.

In order to consolidate this, I have written to him to invite him to join Michael Ancram's bilateral discussions. I hope this comes off. You have, I know, been rightly anxious that without the DUP the process would be much harder to bring to a successful conclusion. I am sure we now need to crack on with the Talks, moving at the right time out of this bilateral phase and addressing, as the 26 March 1991 ground rules necessitate, all the strands.

We have outstanding work between us on developing - in the words the Prime Minister and Taoiseach used in their Brussels Joint Statement - "a framework to carry the process forward". For our part, we had made it clear that in any new Talks we would be ready, if it would help, to table proposals to give focus and direction, but that we wished in advance to share ideas with you. In consequence we agreed, at the IGC on 10 September, to commission officials to produce, without commitment, an illustrative draft of a possible outcome from the process, consistent with the agreed statement of 26 March and likely to prove acceptable to all the parties.

I believe this work remains vital, for at least three reasons. First, it is important that the two Governments develop, and demonstrate, mutual understanding. (The Joint Declaration is one example of this.) Second, all the parties need reassurance that an agreed convergent outcome is possible, so as to give them the necessary confidence to

re-engage in multilateral exchanges. Third, a more developed understanding between the two Governments will facilitate successful Talks. (The Joint Declaration may itself go some of the way, and Michael Ancram hopes to explore this with the parties, but I doubt if it will take the trick on its own.)

We believe the discussions which took place in the Liaison Group were valuable, and should be continued and brought to a conclusion. As you know, we tabled a paper on 24 September, and there were increasingly detailed discussions on it. I know your own response has been complicated by the unauthorised leak of a draft paper on 19 November in the Irish-Press, as well as by uncertainties regarding the Declaration. It may help if I make clear that while there are significant elements of the leaked draft paper which we could not have accepted - as I understand your officials would know from the Liaison Group discussions - I would have regarded it, had it been submitted to us in the intended fashion, as a useful step forward towards a common understanding.

I hope in any event that it will be possible to bring this work to completion. A preliminary document from your side may not be essential. I think officials on both sides, given what they already know of our respective views, might be able to broker a single text, without commitment and ad referendum to Ministers, without the necessity for further intermediate papers. May we instruct them to proceed accordingly, with all despatch, so that we can consider a joint text when we next meet?

Signed: With every good wish,
Yours sincerely,

Patrick