



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Roinn an Taoisigh  
Department of the Taoiseach

*cc. to the British,  
the British,  
copy of letter  
forwarded by the*

*(16) (20)*

DATE: 4/11/95

TIME: 5:40pm

TO: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR: Frank Murray

FROM: Paddy Teahan

TRANSMITTING OPERATOR: Anne

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES, INCLUDING COVER SHEET: 9

*Forwarded to the  
British Prime Minister  
on Wednesday evening  
last together with  
copy of extract  
given to Sinn  
Fein by the  
Teahan also  
on Wednesday P.M.*

MESSAGE: Letter to document

*JK  
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Tithe an Rialtais, Baile Átha Cliath 2.  
Government Buildings, Dublin 2.

**DRAFT**

November, 1995.

The Right Honourable John Major, MP,  
Prime Minister.

Dear John,

I was surprised and disappointed to learn that your "building blocks" paper, which was discussed in the Liaison Group specifically as an aid to your on-going discussion with Sinn Fein, was sent to all the parties, and to the US, and was made public on Friday, all without our prior knowledge or agreement.

I need hardly elaborate on the difficulties which can be caused by a unilateral definition, on either side, of what purports to be - and indeed can only be - a bilateral and agreed process between our two Governments.

We both came to the table at Cannes with proposals for an international body. For my part I put it forward in an effort to overcome the prolonged and potentially dangerous stalemate I foresaw arising from your unilateral insistence on "Washington three" as a pre-condition for negotiations and my own conclusion, which I arrived at reluctantly and only after serious efforts to change the situation, that that pre-condition was not achievable.

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The value of the international body will be directly proportionate to the prospect that its work will transcend this impasse, and not merely postpone it. Sir Patrick Mayhew at the last Anglo-Irish Conference encouragingly invoked this possibility, admittedly with some personal scepticism. I have done what I can in the background to promote maximum flexibility on the part of Sinn Fein on this and other issues also.

As I see it there are six key issues and I believe that there are solutions within our grasp on each of them.

These six issues are

- a date for all party, round table talks
- the procedure for holding preparatory talks
- the basis for political parties speaking authoritatively about paramilitary arms
- the description of the arms the international body will deal with
- the extent of the international body's remit in terms of the "Washington" conditions, and
- the possibility of an elected body.

On a date for round table talks the Irish Government's position has been and remains that a reasonable target date should be set with a clear commitment to

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make the utmost endeavours in good faith to reach it. I believe the date should be six weeks from the date the international body commences work.

On preparatory talks I believe we would proceed as in the draft Communique for the postponed 6 September Summit, i.e.

"The two Governments have agreed to work together to create conditions so that all-party talks in round table format aimed at reaching an agreed political settlement based on consent, could commence [refer to six weeks]. A series of meetings will now be jointly convened by both Governments with all parties to lay the groundwork for these talks.

Both Government share the aim of creating conditions in which all the relevant parties will attend these talks and will participate on the most constructive possible basis."

There should be a completely open agenda for those talks.

On political parties and arms I believe the formula of the relevant political parties "speaking to the international body authoritatively on the position of IRA/Loyalists weapons and the issue of how the arms can be taken out of Irish politics" represents a reasonable basis for moving forward.

On the description of arms/the role of the international body issue, I believe the option Michael Ancram put to Martin McGuinness of having no adjective

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(illegal/paramilitary/unauthorised) in the Communique text and allowing all sides to say what should be dealt with represents the way forward. I understand you, on behalf of the British Government will say the issue is one of paramilitary arms. We will not disagree with you on this but will uphold Sinn Fein's right to put its own position on this issue to the body as it sees fit.

On 'Washington' 1, 2 and 3 I believe the international body should take the entire weapons issue within its purview, and not just 'Washington' 1 and 2, as your "press line" has it in the "building blocks" paper.

A possible way of dealing, in practice, with both the 'Washington' conditions and the description of arms, is to describe the role of the international body as reporting on the arrangements necessary for the removal of arms as instruments of support for or opposition to political aims and activities.

On the political track, the Irish side in the Liaison Group made clear we expected the intergovernmental political track to be more proactive than in your paper. The changes subsequently made did not reflect this, but instead flagged an elected body.

I have taken the position, and encouraged others to accept, that unionist proposals for such a body should be given a respectful and constructive hearing.

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You will be aware that opposition to an internal settlement is a common rallying point for Northern nationalists (comparable in this respect to a united Ireland proposal for unionists). Consequently, they are adamantly opposed in principle to any process which gives primacy or privilege to the internal strand. If an elected body is to be flagged then any joint text must also adequately reflect the consistent view of Northern nationalists I have touched on above.

I believe you and I should now move quickly to holding a Summit, say in the third week of November, and having a reasonable joint position to put to all sides.

I would welcome an opportunity for a telephone discussion with you on these matters before your departure for the Commonwealth Conference. I would particularly welcome an account of your current assessment of the unionist positions and intentions, in the light of your contacts with them.

Yours sincerely,

John Bruton  
Taoiseach.

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- the procedure for holding preparatory talks
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On political parties and arms the formula of the relevant political parties "speaking to the international body authoritatively on the position of IRA/Loyalists weapons and the issue of how the arms can be taken out of Irish politics" represents a reasonable basis for moving forward.

On the description of arms/the role of the international body issue, the option Michael Ancram put to Martin McGuinness of having no adjective (illegal/paramilitary/unauthorised) in the Communique text and allowing all sides to say what should be dealt with represents the way forward. The British Government will say the issue is one of paramilitary arms. The Irish Government will not disagree on this but will uphold Sinn Fein's right to put its own position on this issue to the body as it sees fit.

On 'Washington' 1, 2 and 3 the international body should take the entire weapons issue within its purview, and not just 'Washington' 1 and 2, as the "press line" has it in the "building blocks" paper.

A possible way of dealing, in practice, with both the 'Washington' conditions and the description of arms, is to describe the role of the international body as reporting on the arrangements necessary for the removal of arms as instruments of support for or opposition to political aims and activities.

The intergovernmental political track should be more proactive than in the building blocks paper.

As regards Unionist proposals for an elected body, these should be given a respectful and constructive hearing.

However, it must also be acknowledged that opposition to an internal settlement is a common rallying point for Northern nationalists. Consequently, they are adamantly opposed in principle to any process which gives primacy or privilege to the internal strand. If an elected body is to be flagged, then any joint text must adequately reflect the consistent view of Northern nationalists on this issue.