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FROM: QUENTIN THOMAS
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File
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cc JP
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PS/MR MURPHY(L&B)

cc PS/Secretary of State(L&B)
PS/Mr Ingram(L&B)
PS/PUS(L&B)
PS/Mr Semple
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Mr Bell
Mr Daniell
Mr Leach
Mr Stephens
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TAOISEACH'S SPEECH AT BODENSTOWN: 19 OCTOBER 1997

You will have seen the text of the Taoiseach's speech given at the annual Wolfe Tone Commemoration at Bodenstown on Sunday 19 October. This is of course a key commemorative ritual featuring Fianna Fail in particular.

2. It was clear from the margins of Castle Buildings that Mr Martin Mansergh was the principal author, that he took some pride in it but was rueful that the Presidential election meant that it received very little publicity.

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3. There are some nuggets worth noting:

- In a passage clearly addressed to Sinn Féin the speech reminds that HMG's role in the Talks is a facilitator. This is because, in the language of the Downing Street Declaration, there is a commitment to give effect to any measure of agreement which the people living in Ireland may themselves freely determine without external impediment. In other words it is a reminder that one of the needs of Republican ideology is met in the process: the people of Ireland, without external (i.e. British) impediment can decide the future for themselves.
- There is a new formulation, echoing that given by the then British Government in the Downing Street Declaration, that while Nationalists seek an Ireland reunited in peace and agreement "it is no longer out of any selfish interest on our part".
- He emphasises that the settlement will involve constitutional change with both Constitutions being adapted to accept more explicitly the principle of consent. "The reality today is that Ireland can only be reunited by the free choice and co-determination of its people north and south."
- The indication that participants in the Talks may argue for "more fundamental and competing constitutional choices" even if something less radical has to be settled for. In other words the Taoiseach is seeking to satisfy the Sinn Féin wish to discuss ending of partition but signalling also that the process will have to settle for something less ("even if no final solution of these issues can now be made").

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- There is much emphasis on the closeness of the relationship between the two islands and the close co-operation between the two Governments.

(Signed)

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