

Dermot Nally Papers

UCDA P254/14



P2S4/14

Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

17 June, 1993.

Mr. Sean O'hUiginn,
Assistant Secretary,
Department of Foreign Affairs.

SECRET

Dear Sean,

I enclose a note of yesterday's meeting. You will be glad to see that you are included in the talks.

I spoke to Butler on this and he asked if you would have your office get in touch with his office so that we can arrange a time for a meeting - presumably in Dublin, but I will go anywhere that suits.

I am sending a copy of this note to Noel.

Yours sincerely,

Dermot Nally.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Misc.
F. 2.

Uimhir.....

SECRET

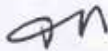
Taoiseach,

I attach a note of yesterday's meeting.

I have sent a copy to Sean O hUiginn and am trying to arrange an early meeting with Butler and Chilcot.

I would suggest that consideration be given to reviving, and if possible, extending our informal communications with the Unionists, not to tell them what is afoot but to sound them on views and try to develop informal channels of communication. Ostensibly, the contacts could be connected with the possibility of the revived talks.

I think also that consideration might be given to the question of work through the Embassy in London on British M.P.s similar to that done as a preliminary to the Anglo Irish Agreement. This could, however, wait until things are a little further forward on what we are doing.



Dermot Nally,
17 June, 1993.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

SUBJECT TO VERIFICATION
SECRET & PERSONAL

Tete-a-Tete Meeting Between Taoiseach and Prime Minister Major

The meeting took place on 16th June in the Cabinet Room, Downing Street, and lasted just over half-an-hour. Apart from the principals, it was attended by Cabinet Secretary Butler, the Prime Minister's Private Secretary and the under-signed.

The meeting opened with some general comment by the Prime Minister about the rating in opinion polls of different Leaders throughout the world. He said that Kohl, Clinton, Mitterrand and others all had an extraordinarily low rating in the polls. The Taoiseach said that he had noted that phenomenon, particularly in relation to Kohl. When the Berlin Wall fell, Kohl's rating was very high but, within about six months or so, he had fallen to the bottom of the scale. The Prime Minister went on to say that this could, perhaps, be attributed to the "CNN factor". As Wilson had said, a lie could be half-way around the world electronically before the victim had a chance to deny it. Butler intervened to say that the Chancellor's Guild Hall speech, on the previous day, had been the subject of critical commentary in the media, before it had been delivered: even the Opposition had come out with their criticism before the speech was delivered!

There were then some brief references to current problems here - including unemployment, Aer Lingus, and political issues. The Prime Minister said that he was "not going to mince words in Copenhagen". It was time, he said for a peasant's revolt. The Community had some really balmy ideas. Some straight talking was long overdue. We have had a monetary policy, the result of which is over 18 million unemployed in the Community. Was that not a success? He then turned to the Taoiseach and asked him for an update of his views on Northern Ireland.

The Taoiseach said there were a number of points he would like to make. First, he would like the Prime Minister to be clear that the Government was fully supportive, publicly, of the talks but the Prime Minister should be aware of our view that they were not going anywhere. We should now start to think seriously beyond them. A certain ideological organisation had made approaches to him, about which he had initially been very sceptical. At the same time, he was very anxious to stop the violence - either that was on the table or he was not interested. Finally, a paper had appeared which, in its present form, was well crafted. It included in it, an extension to the "problem people" of the idea of consent in Northern Ireland to Irish unity. That was a major political shift - and could possibly lead away from violence and back to peace.

The Taoiseach went on to say that he didn't believe that anyone outside would accept that we could get so far. Peace was on offer with some minimalist conditions for the other side. The paper included a lot of stuff said before by British Governments and had in it the idea of self-

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-2-

determination by the Irish people, but the Unionists could still withhold their consent.

If the violence could be stopped, then there would be a total transformation of the scene. We were not talking about anything happening within a particular time limit - even a generation was not a fixed limit.

The Prime Minister said he was glad to hear of the Taoiseach's continuing support for the talks. Paisley was not at his most cooperative - but we must "keep hope alive". They were extremely grateful to the Taoiseach for letting me brief Butler so fully on the whole background to the new text. The Prime Minister felt that it was important we should know clearly the British view of the text -

First, it was a very important development that there is a text at all. Sinn Fein and the IRA have now got a text they can bring forward but there were two questions the Prime Minister must ask -

- . would the text be acceptable to the House of Commons? and
- . would it have the effect we want with the Unionists?

They had looked at the text with the very helpful aide memoire which accompanied it. What struck them most about it was what was not in the text - it was a case of the dog that did not bark. We have to be careful about the sensitivities of the Unionists and the sensitivities of the House of Commons, so far as they were concerned the text falls down because

- (1) as it stood, they felt, it would not be remotely acceptable to the Unionists. If it were produced in its present form, there would be a multiple of the Anglo-Irish Agreement protests (when 500,000 people had protested in the streets of Belfast);
- (2) this would prompt an escalation of paramilitary violence. The Unionist violence would become proactive rather than reactive;
- (3) these developments would put back political progress for many years. It would cement up the Unionist blockage;
- (4) even if the Provos kept their word and tried to stay away from violence, they would have to respond to Unionist violence. This was a formula for maximum bloodshed.

At the same time, the Prime Minister said, he did not wish to be too negative and would like to see, perhaps, how these assertions could be further tested. Any text would have to include an explicit reference to consent of the people of Northern Ireland - not just the whole of Ireland.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-3-

The British would not act to persuade the people of Northern Ireland to offer consent to a united Ireland. Any attempt by them to do so would be counter-productive.

Next, they couldn't compromise the rights of Northern Ireland to remain in the United Kingdom for as long as they wished. For this reason, they would have the gravest reservations about any specification of a time-scale.

They were particularly concerned about sentences in paragraph 4 which, they felt, would not be acceptable even to the Labour Party (British).

In short, the text as it stood, would not really run. It would, however, perhaps be helpful if John Chilcot and Robin Butler ran through all parts with me - to see if they could develop together the sort of principles we could consider. Would the Taoiseach have any objection to bringing Chilcot into the negotiating team? The Prime Minister was hugely impressed that we have kept the text private so far. The smaller the circle in which it moves, the better.

On John Hume, where is he in this whole question? What about his discussions with Gerry Adams?

In short, the draft was not bearable as it stands but he felt we could try to keep progress going - there was a huge prize if "it can be done". For him, the test must be how would the document be received by the Cabinet?, by the House of Commons?, by Ulstermen? and by the press? He would like to exchange views through the channels he had mentioned on these questions.

The Taoiseach said that he was, of course, not in a position to judge political reaction in the United Kingdom. Insofar as Chilcot was concerned, he certainly had no objection to his joining in the process but he would suggest that, on our side, Sean O hUiginn might also be brought in. If they could come along, then we could leave the negotiation more or less as it was at present.

When he had got the original draft, he had rejected areas which he knew would not be remotely acceptable.

On the idea of joint self-determination, to which the Prime Minister had referred, the Taoiseach had floated this idea in a speech some time ago and had got a reaction from the Secretary of the Unionist Party - McGimpsey - which was not at all unfavourable. He had no wish to put the British Government in a position they couldn't accept. Unionist businessmen like to see the talks going ahead. They say that in 20 or 30 years time, the entire picture will have changed. Even at present, some of them had told him that 52% of children under 11 years of age are of Catholic or Republican persuasion. They are saying that maybe they should be looking ahead now and making preparations for the future.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-4-

What he was suggesting now was that we should sit down and try to develop these ideas. There was no fixed agenda for a united Ireland: certainly no limit as to time. The Unionists had said that if IRA violence stopped then they would stop. They have said that often enough. If the others say they will stop their violence, then, if we got things right, all violence could stop. We would have peace. That would be a great prize.

The Prime Minister said that if the Provos stopped for a period and then came forward with documents like this, there would be hope.

But if they started a period of violence like - for example, Warrington - and then came forward with the document, there would be no hope. That scenario would be disastrous.

The Taoiseach said that that would not happen in his judgement. It was not an easy document to get through. If there is progress to be made in this area, it is the Prime Minister and he who must and could do it.

On John Hume, he had talks on and off for some time, certainly since 1988. The Taoiseach was not sure that he could be trusted 100% on this particular issue. John Hume is John Hume and sometimes acts as a solo merchant. The clergymen don't trust him either. He wanted to continue the talks himself but they would not have it. He wanted to come with the document himself but that was not acceptable to them. One fear the Taoiseach said he had was that John Hume might leak the document. A leak would finish the proposal for all time.

The Prime Minister said that this was a matter for the Taoiseach and himself. Neither of them could negotiate with the paramilitaries - and that must be completely clear. Perhaps we could go ahead as we had agreed.

At this point - approximately 6.40 p.m. - the meeting was joined by Foreign Secretary Hurd, Secretary of State Mayhew, Chilcot, Ambassador Blatherwick and the Irish side for the start of the plenary session. Separate notes are available on this.

A communique issued after the meeting is appended to this note.



Dermot Nally,
17 June, 1993.