

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

20 June 1996

Dee Martin,

BELFAST TALKS: UUP VIEWS

David Trimble telephoned me today to brief me on UUP views of where the process now stood. He said that Tuesday had been a good day, and he had been confident at that stage that agreement was likely to be reached on the rules of procedure and the agenda. He had had a good meeting with your Secretary of State on Tuesday evening, when there had seemed to be agreement on how to handle the issue of decommissioning in the context of the agenda.

However things had gone wrong in the middle of Wednesday morning when Michael Ancram had, quite unnecessarily in their view, responded to a question from Peter Robinson about the ground rules by producing a sheet of paper with a typed amendment which would have incorporated the entire ground rules paper in the rules of procedure. This typed amendment had clearly been prepared for some time, and the UUP were suspicious that it had been cooked up with the Irish. The suggestion that the whole of the ground rules paper should be effectively approved was not acceptable to the Unionists. The DUP had taken this as vindication of their stand, and the SDLP had gone nuclear for opposite reasons.

The UUP view was that there was absolutely no need to incorporate all the ground rules paper. The ground rules could be left to sit there on one side without becoming an issue in this way. He understood that the UUP had had a meeting earlier today with Michael Ancram. Their view was that it was for him to rescue the situation he had created. They were not against using bits of the ground rules paper in the procedural rules for the plenary, but not the whole lot.

The UUP had suggested to the Chairman last night that on Monday, when the talks reconvened, they should go back to the previous discussion on the rules of procedure and try to conclude this. They could then return to the ground rules question and try to sort that out. They hoped that, after a rest for all concerned, it would be easier to tackle.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

I said that Trimble's account of events did not entirely square with the account I had had from you. But the important thing was that we were ready to look for a way round present difficulties. It sounded as if the UUP were too. There therefore seemed no reason why a solution could not be found. Trimble agreed, adding that this would certainly be helped if there was no rowing back on decisions he and your Secretary of State had reached on Tuesday night about decommissioning.

I pass all this on for what it is worth. Trimble was quite calm, but obviously in need of a rest after the hectic discussions. He was not in an abusive mood about the NIO, despite his suggestion that Michael Ancram had deliberately set out to throw a spanner in the works on Wednesday morning.

I am copying this to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

CONVERSATION WITH THE TAOISEACH

Yours ever
John

JOHN HOLMES

Martin Howard Esq
Northern Ireland Office

CONFIDENTIAL