

Confidential

PST; PSS; Ministers Owen,  
de Rossa & Taylor; Attorney  
General; Minister of State  
Coveney; Messrs. Teahon,  
Donlon & Dalton; Amb.  
London and Washington; Joint  
Secretary; Counsellors A-I.

Summary Report (16 July)

1. Delegations returned to Castle Buildings today in a state of some turmoil following the Drumcree and Ormeau Road parade decisions and the widespread violence and unrest of the past few days.
2. No plenary session took place. The Chairmen engaged in a round of bilaterals with all delegations to elicit views on how to proceed.
3. The Government delegation, which was led by the Tanaiste and also included the Minister for Justice and Minister of State Coveney, had bilaterals with the Chairmen, the British Government, the SDLP, the NIWC and the UDP. A meeting also took place with Alliance this morning. The Unionist parties did not respond to our approaches. The PUP also declined, stressing that this was a difficult period for them in their efforts to preserve the UVF ceasefire.
4. What emerged from these contacts was a general consensus that the present process can only be salvaged if the UUP demonstrate a willingness to resolve rapidly the outstanding procedural points and to move the negotiations on to matters of substance without further delay. The delegations to whom we spoke accepted that there could be no question of simply picking up where matters had been left prior to Drumcree. In the dramatically altered circumstances, a major impetus is required to lift the talks out of the stalemate engendered by the weeks of procedural nit-picking.
5. A second important theme, emphasised by the SDLP, Alliance and the NIWC was the need to confront the Unionist parties on their clear violation of the Mitchell principles in statements made over the past few days. On the Unionist side, there were predictable complaints about the SDLP decision to resign from the Forum.
6. Senator Mitchell's initial inclination was to convene a plenary for the purpose of allowing participants to ventilate grievances of all kinds arising from recent events. In our contacts with him and the British Government, we advised against this on the grounds that open-ended "blood-letting" would encourage hard-line positions and reinforce, rather than diminish, DUP/UKUP pressure over Trimble. It would be unwise to go into a plenary unless we had a clear advance indication that the UUP were determined to resist such pressure and to move with the rest of us towards meaningful talks.
7. The Senator took this point, though he felt that it would be difficult to put off a plenary indefinitely (and some delegations are pressing for one on Thursday). The Secretary of State was also initially inclined to the view that a plenary session was needed to let off steam but seemed sympathetic to our argument.
8. At our meetings with the Chairmen and other delegations, we suggested that the key question to be answered at this juncture is whether or not the UUP intend to do business. It is possible that Trimble may have an interest in demonstrating a constructive and statesmanlike approach to the talks in order to compensate for the excesses of last week. If so, a clear test would be whether or not he is willing to agree the few remaining points in the draft rules of procedure, and to agree the agenda

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for the opening plenary, on the basis of "sufficient consensus". This test would require him effectively to break with Paisley and McCartney and to make a definitive commitment to these talks. If he fails the test, the appropriate response would probably be for the two Governments and the other participants either to wind up the process altogether or to have the Chairmen adjourn it until the autumn (in the faint hope of more propitious circumstances developing).

9. We suggested to the Chairman that, in the light of a further round of bilaterals, he might consider drawing up a paper setting out a final version of the rules of procedure and plenary agenda, which he would submit to delegations for approval by sufficient consensus.
10. It was subsequently agreed, in separate contacts which the Chairmen had with the UUP and the SDLP, that these two parties would submit papers on the outstanding points for agreement in the rules of procedure. The Chairmen are to consult both parties tomorrow on these papers (since received) with a view to facilitating agreement. Senator Mitchell was not optimistic, however, on the latter point.
11. The bilateral between the two Governments was brief and low-key. It was agreed that Ministers would focus on the juncture reached in the talks and that the major issues arising from last week's parades and their aftermath would be left for discussion at Thursday's IGC. Ancram underlined the need for a show of renewed determination to make speedy progress and favoured very early finalisation of agreement on sufficient consensus in order to give the Chairmen greater control of the proceedings.
12. Among points of interest which arose in the other bilaterals today was a strong presentation by John Alderdice on the massive erosion of nationalist confidence in the wake of Drumcree and the enormity of Trimble's folly. He also argued that the issue of Unionist violation of the Mitchell principles could not be avoided. However, acknowledging a point which we had made about the difficult consequences of indicting the entire Unionist leadership on this issue, he suggested that it might be possible for the matter to be investigated by the two Governments, in parallel with the talks, in such a way as to buy time over the summer recess for a satisfactory resolution which would not create difficulties for other potential participants.
13. The Chairmen issued a statement this evening underlining the need to pursue through dialogue a solution to the problems evidenced during the past week and reporting a clear consensus among the participants, in the light of today's consultations, to continue with the talks in a spirit of urgency and increased determination.
14. One point of note was that the relationship between the DUP and the UKUP appeared to have cooled as a result of McCartney's criticism of the DUP's support for the Drumcree protests. In a departure from their practice hitherto, the two parties conducted separate bilaterals with the British Government and the Chairmen.