

File

FROM: MISS G HARRISON
TALKS SECRETARIAT
17 JULY 1996

889
NIO LONDON

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
- PS/Sir John Wheeler (B, L&DFP) - B
- PS/Michael Ancram (B, L&DENI) - B
- PS/Malcolm Moss (B, DHSS&DOE) - B
- PS/Baroness Denton (B, DOE&DANI) - B
- PS/PS (B&L) - B
- PS/Sir David Fell - *18/17*
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr Steele - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Wood (B&L) - B
- Mr Beeton - B
- Mr Currie - B
- Mr D Hill (B&L) - B
- Mr Lavery - B
- Mr Lindsay - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Perry - B
- Mr Stephens - B
- Ms Checksfield - B
- Ms Mapstone - B
- Mr Whysall - B
- Ms Collins (Cabinet Office) via IPL - B
- Mr O'Mahoney, TAU - B
- Mr Lamont, RID FCO - B
- HMA Dublin - B
- Mr Westmacott Washington via IPL - B
- Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
- Mrs McNally - B

File Note

TALKS: TUESDAY 16 JULY 1996

Summary

1. A fairly long day of bilateral meetings focussing on how best to move forward in the light of Drumcree and its violent aftermath.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

There was also discussion about the forthcoming march of the Apprentice Boys of Londonderry on 10 August. During the course of the day, the Secretary of State and Michael Ancram met delegations from all the parties except the SDLP (who refused to talk to anyone else apart from the three chairmen) and Labour who, after requesting a meeting, had left the building. Meetings were also held with the Irish Government and the three chairmen. Senator Mitchell who arrived mid-afternoon and his colleagues held meetings with most of the parties to learn their views on the best way to proceed.

2. The general mood was while what had happened last week could not be ignored, the only way forward was through the Talks process. However, there were different views on the way ahead, ranging from a cathartic plenary "blood letting" session (DUP and PUP), a meeting between the Prime Minister and the four main party leaders (UUP), a suspension of talks until September (UKUP), a desire to accuse the Unionists of breaching the Mitchell principles (Alliance) and a wish to deal swiftly with procedural rules and move on to substantive issues (UDP, Irish Government, SDLP).

3. By the end of the day, all significant participants agreed that the best approach was for the Independent chairmen to broker a deal on the procedural rules between the SDLP and the UUP.

4. Detail

Following the usual Ministerial meeting which discussed the handling of the days business the first bilateral was with the Alliance Party at 10.55 am. Dr Alderdice, who did most of the talking, was in "Götterdämmerung" mood. By reversing his original decision at Drumcree, the Chief Constable was saying that the rule of law could not run in the face of the Orange Order and that the RUC could not protect the nationalist community. Dr Alderdice would find it very difficult to argue against any nationalist demand for increased Dublin involvement to protect their interests. The Chief Constable had lost the confidence of the whole of the nationalist community and also of liberal protestants. When questioned he

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

mitted 80% of protestants were behind Mr Trimble. The only conceivable way of achieving credibility would be to appoint a new Chief Constable.

5. The Drumcree incident was not about a march, but about political control. In the light of Mr Trimble's involvement and in talking to Billy Wright, responsible for organising the murder of the catholic taxi driver, he had wrecked the Talks process. Mr Trimble had conspired to undermine the leadership of the UVF because they were too liberal. Both the UUP and DUP, (but not the UKUP) had clearly dishonoured the Mitchell principles and he now found it difficult to sustain the exclusion of Sinn Fein from the Talks process. John Hume was not far from abandoning the Talks unless Sinn Fein were brought on board. Mr Thomas referred to the legal inhibition on admitting Sinn Fein without a ceasefire and the Secretary of State said that an amendment to the statute would never be carried in Parliament.

6. There was a discussion on handling breaches of the Mitchell principles when Mr Thomas referred to the amendment to the Rules of Procedure tabled by the British Government which dealt with the point.

7. The Secretary of State and Michael Ancram made several attempts to seek Dr Alderdice's views on how to keep the Talks going but without receiving any response. Dr Alderdice admitted that there would not be a viable process if the Unionists were not involved but said they should be asked what they were going to do to repair the damage. He returned to a familiar theme, that the two Governments should take responsibility and impose a solution.

8. On the Forum, Dr Alderdice had written to the Chairman, John Gorman suggesting that Friday's meetings should be postponed. The Alliance party would not be attending on Friday, although they were not walking out. The meeting concluded at 11.35 am.

9. During the course of the meeting it was learned that a substantial Sinn Fein protest was building up. About 50/60

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Protesters had arrived in buses and marched to the top of the hill in front of Parliament Buildings. Sinn Fein subsequently asked to speak to an official but before the matter was resolved, it was reported that they had marched back down the hill to their buses after duly receiving the desired publicity - subsequently shown on the lunchtime TV news bulletins.

10. The second bilateral, with the UUP, led by Mr Trimble and Mr Taylor began at 11.57 am. Mr Trimble appeared unchastened, showed no remorse and put on a cheerful face, but this may have masked worries about the situation. Mr Taylor enquired about the presence of the Irish and the SDLP in the building and asked whether they had apologised for their absence.

11. When questioned, Mr Trimble said that he had not had contact with either Mr Hume or Mr Mallon. He assumed that they would raise the alleged breach of the Mitchell principles which he dismissed as "a silly debating point".

12. The Secretary of State referred to the Alliance Party's sombre mood. Mr Trimble suggested that the Prime Minister met the leader of the four parties involved in the 1992 Talks - thus neatly excluding Mr McCartney. He did not agree with Dr Paisley's proposal for a plenary session to enable him to "clear his gut" and lambast everyone in sight.

13. Michael Ancram suggested that the UUP needed to build bridges possibly in the form of bilaterals, and Mr Trimble and Mr Taylor did not dissent. However Mr Trimble thought his suggestion of a meeting with the Prime Minister and the four leaders would accelerate to the process. He had no other suggestions to make. The Secretary of State did not respond.

14. The UUP expressed concern about the forthcoming march of the Apprentice Boys of Derry on 10 August. It was believed that the nationalists were planning something big - a concerted effort to remove the last remaining Protestants from the Fountain area. Mr Trimble suggested a limited route, through the Fountain and

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Commercial areas only to the Memorial and the Diamond but with the walls sealed off, as well as Butcher's Gate and Bishop's Gate and Mr Taylor agreed.

15. It was known that the SDLP had asked to meet the Chairmen first, before any of the other participants and it was left that the UUP would wait and see how this meeting went. The meeting concluded at 12.17 pm.

16. The bilateral with the DUP, unusually unaccompanied by the UKUP, began at 12.26pm. Dr. Paisley and Mr Robinson did most of the talking. They were anxious to get away from the recent megaphone diplomacy and to get everyone round the table and face up to the outrageous changes of Unionists breaching the Mitchell principles. Dr Paisley said he had his own charges to make. They were against bilaterals and thought it was necessary for everyone to get the poison out of their systems and face up to their differences before moving on to other matters.

17. On Drumcree, Dr Paisley said that he had almost got a deal brokered with "respectable people" from the Garvaghy Road, and had told Mr Hume, but that this had been destroyed by the four clergymen.

18. The DUP also referred to the SDLP withdrawing from the Forum, taking the view that if they resigned as delegates they could not participate in the Talks. Michael Ancram advised that withdrawal was possible.

19. There followed an extensive discussion about the forthcoming march of the Apprentice Boys of Londonderry. Gregory Campbell said there were threats from the nationalist community to blockade the bridge and prevent the parade from entering the Fountain area. Apparently Brid Rogers and Mark Durkan had been addressing republican rallies. There were also moves to try and remove the Unionist Mayor of Derry. The Protestant community in the Fountain were seeking physical reassurance that they would not be burned out of their homes. Mr Campbell reported that the Apprentice Boys would

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

ke the Parade to be conducted in a manner and at a time that would take the heat out of the situation. When questioned by the Secretary of State Mr Campbell indicated that he thought a deal could be brokered through the Hollywood Trust. Dr Paisley advised the Secretary of State not to intervene and said that there would be problems if Sinn Fein got to hear of a possible deal. The Secretary of State asked to be kept informed of developments. The meeting concluded 12.52 pm.

20. After lunch the Secretary of State and Michael Ancram met a delegation from the UDP. Mr McMichael said that the situation was serious but the talks process was the only way forward. It was important to present to others that the work was continuing. They objected to a summer break and Michael Ancram indicated that it would be necessary to take another look at the arrangements for August.

21. Mr McMichael and his colleagues then returned to a familiar theme about the lack of recognition of reformed loyalist life prisoners. The case of Thomas Green was also raised. The Secretary of State concluded by saying that he was always willing to read a shopping list on prisons issues from the UDP - but without commitment.

22. At 1.45 pm a message was reported from Paddy Teahon via John Holmes that the SDLP would give Mr Trimble two or three days to sort out the procedural rules and then walk out of the talks if these were not settled. SDLP saw the rules of procedure as a way of testing UUP willingness to engage on substantive issues.

23. A UKUP delegation arrival at 2.45pm Mr McCartney favoured a cooling off period with Talks suspended until September. He felt Dr Paisley's idea of a purging session would turn the atmosphere sour. However, he would not be pressing hard for any particular approach and if talks were re-convened, he would be there.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Mr McCartney complemented both the Secretary of State on his statement and the Prime Minister on his Panorama interview. The conversation then turned to a request for public reassurance that the Government did not intend to impose a settlement. Mr McCartney returned to his theme that it was not possible to offer parity of esteem to two mutually exclusive objectives, and the conversation then went over familiar territory - "no selfish strategic or economic interest", Frameworks, the Anglo-Irish Agreement on the attitude of the Dublin Government. The meeting concluded at 2.15 pm.

25. Following an offer to the Irish side to hold a joint meeting, which was refused, the Secretary of State and Michael Ancram met the three Chairmen and their aides at 3.33pm. The Secretary of State made it clear that the Government's objective was to keep the process going and that was the view of all those parties he had met so far, but there was divergence on how best to proceed. He gave a resume on the outcome of his bilaterals. Senator Mitchell reported that he had just met the SDLP who were opposed to a round table discussion on the grounds that this would exacerbate feelings. If there was such a meeting which went beyond rules of procedure, the SDLP would press their arguments about the Unionist violation of the principles of democracy and consent and the murder of Mr McGoldrick. The SDLP wanted quick progress to resolve issues on the rules. They did not want to engage in bilaterals and the Senator had offered to broker a deal between the Unionists and the SDLP to ascertain whether the UUP were interested in an accommodation.

26. Michael Ancram suggested that it might be necessary to consider proceeding by means of sufficient consensus to get the rules of procedure agreed. The Senator would be seeing the other parties during the course of the afternoon and early evening and might have a further meeting with the British side to consider the way forward. The meeting concluded 3.55pm.

27. A bilateral with the PUP took place at 4.47pm. This was similar to the UDP meeting with the PUP considering it essential for

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

talks to continue but felt blood letting was unavoidable. It would be a disaster if Sinn Fein were admitted without a ceasefire. They also pleaded for a reward for the loyalist ceasefire, which had been under great strain since Canary Wharf, and which would be lost if there was any further move by PIRA anywhere. Again the Secretary of State indicated his willingness to look at a shopping list on prisons issues but without commitment. The meeting ended at 5.04pm.

28. A meeting with the Irish delegation took place at 5.09pm, led by Mr Spring, Mr Coveney and Mrs. Owen, which focussed, at Mr Spring's suggestion on talks in the aftermath of the previous week. He was concerned that if the situation was allowed to go into "free fall" it would only become worse. The Secretary of State explained that the other parties he had met wanted to proceed but held widely divergent views on the approach. The Irish side felt there was a need to find out if the UUP and SDLP could do business. Trimble was the key. It was important to have a structured approach in place dealing with the rules of procedure so that something positive could emerge from the talks, rather than having just a blood-letting session. This pointed to bilaterals this week and a plenary next week, although the Chairmen were under pressure to hold a plenary. The meeting concluded at 5.27 pm.

29. The Irish side declined a joint doorstep but agreed that both Governments would speak separately to the press about plenary commitment to the talks process. This took place later in the evening.

30. At 5.55pm Michael Ancram met the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. He explained the Government had seen most of the parties during the course of the day, except Labour and that it would be for the Chairmen to decide how to take matters forward, either on plenary or bilaterally. He summarised the views of the parties and asked for the Coalition's views.

31. Bronagh Hinds referred to Drumcree and said that the Chief Constable's original decision should have stood. As a result of the

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

ange of decision, the Province was on the brink of something serious. The nationalist community now felt that there were grave doubts about the possibility of a negotiated settlement, which would involve compromise. The loyalist parties were behaving more moderately than the main Unionist parties. The RUC had lost the confidence of the whole of the nationalist community and a substantive part of the Unionist community as well.

32. The Coalition wanted to find a way forward and keep the SDLP in the process but the Unionists needed to know that they could not just walk into talks and not be held to account for what had happened at Drumcree. It was important that the Unionists were willing to reach out and show some movement.

33. The Coalition expressed concern about the Forum, alleging that certain speeches in the debate on Drumcree on 8 July, amounted to an incitement to hatred and that the Chairman handled it atrociously. The Coalition intended to stay in despite the SDLP withdrawing but to date it had been a circus. It was suggested that the Forum might be wound up. The Minister was then asked if the Government could take steps to blur segregation within Northern Ireland. Michael Ancram referred to housing and education. The meeting concluded at 6.00 pm.

34. The three Chairmen issued a statement at 7.55pm. This was circulated under separate cover by Mrs McNally earlier today.

35. At the end of the day the Independent Chairmen de-briefed the British side. They confirmed that they had had a constructive meeting with the UUP. Mr Trimble had agreed to the idea of the Independent Chairmen brokering a rules of procedure text between the SDLP and UUP and asked Peter Weir to produce a checklist of UUP concerns/proposals to set alongside the SDLP's. Their staff would be producing an analysis of both documents by 9.30 am on 17 July at which point the Chairmen would try to decide whether there was a prospect of reaching informal agreement on rules of procedure in time to present them to the whole group on Thursday, or whether it would be better to aim for Tuesday of next week.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

36. The British side mentioned the need to reach agreement on the agenda for the rest of the opening plenary within the same timescale, quoting our understanding that this was the position of both the UUP and the SDLP. Michael Ancram undertook to put our proposed agenda to the UUP first thing in the morning and report reactions. The Chairmen seemed hesitant: Senator Mitchell said he would check with Seamus Mallon whether the SDLP were in fact keen to see the agenda sorted out as well as the rules of procedure, but they agreed to defer their decision on the timing of any round table meeting until 12 noon on 17 July. They also said that they would report developments to the Irish Government delegation, which had by then left the building.

(Signed)

G Harrison (Miss)
Political Development Team
17 July 1996

C O N F I D E N T I A L