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FROM: ROBERT CRAWFORD
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14 OCTOBER 1997

cc: as attached

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS SUMMARY: 14 OCTOBER 1997

The day commenced as planned with the scheduled meeting of Strand Two negotiations at 10.00am, followed by a very short Strand Three meeting with the Irish delegation. The Secretary of State and Mr Murphy then met the UUP, at their request, to discuss confidence building measures.

Strand Two

The Chairman began by inviting the parties to adhere to the practice adopted for Strand One, to make brief statements summarising their positions rather than reading the papers prepared for the meeting. Each party delivered a short statement of their position, which then developed into a wider discussion. The following gives a very brief summary of an extensive 3 hour debate.

In putting the Sinn Fein view, Adams stated that any settlement must have an all Ireland character and that the best model for this was a unitary state with a centralised authority. The SDLP (Mallon) emphasised heavily the importance to the SDLP and Nationalists generally of cross-border institutions with executive powers. He said HMG and Unionists needed to understand that not just equality of treatment and parity of esteem which Nationalists required, but equality of allegiance. This was essential to Nationalists, to

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allow them to express their Irish allegiance on an equal basis with Unionists expression of their Britishness.

The Loyalist parties expressed their commitment to the Union, with the UDP adding that cross-border institutions with executive powers were unacceptable. Gary McMichael said that Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution on the Anglo-Irish Agreement were inconsistent with the principle that the status for Northern Ireland could only be changed with the consent of a majority of its people. The UUP also identified Articles 2 and 3 as a basic obstacle to future respect and recognition, saying they were priority items for the Republic of Ireland to address before issues of co-operation could be addressed. The UUP stated their own opposition to cross-border institution with executive powers but indicated that they were entirely content to agree to co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Such co-operation would not be acceptable if it weakened the Union or was designed to lead to a united Ireland.

This led to an interesting debate when Sinn Fein and the SDLP attempted to question the UUP as to whether they were prepared to accept any executive institutions and their commitment to equality of allegiance etc. The UUP refused to answer directly any questions from Sinn Fein, usually simply declining to answer-although on one occasion Jeffrey Donaldson was prepared to offer clarification through the Chairman. The debate between the SDLP and the UUP however concluded on a reasonably positive note with Sean Farren expressing himself reasonably encouraged by the UUP answers, to the effect that they would be prepared to consider executive institutions which were not set up for the purpose of creating a united Ireland. Farren also welcomed the UUP declaration that they were interested in the totality of relationships, seen by them in the context of changed relationships within the British Isles

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following devolution and the wider European Union. The UUP, however, made it clear that they were not prepared to accept the Frameworks document as a starting point, rather viewing the present negotiations as beginning on a clean sheet of paper.

Sinn Fein were also questioned, most effectively by the Alliance Party, regarding the paper submitted by them. Stephen McBride pointed out that paragraph 8 recorded that the view of Republicans that the agreement of Unionists would be essential to any settlement. What did this mean other than acknowledge of a Unionist vote? Adams reply was that, while Sinn Fein certainly sought the agreement of Unionists, if this was not forthcoming it would be for the two Governments to act to resolve the matter. Unionists had no right to a veto on the constitutional issue, although Sinn Fein wanted their involvement in agreeing future arrangements (ie within a united Ireland). Joining in the questioning of Sinn Fein, Ervine agreed with McBride that no Government should have the right to impose anything on the people of Northern Ireland. It was for the participants to address and debate the issues and reach a resolution. The PUP were quite happy to address all these issues and Sinn Fein should not be so impatient as to want to deal with them all in one afternoon. On the constitutional issue and equality of allegiance, Ervine said that it was surely wrong that he should be asked to diminish his allegiance in order to make someone else feel better. He concluded with a complaint about Adams "lecturing" tone.

Overall, a reasonably encouraging debate which did identify the key areas and resulted in, at least to a limited extent, some engagement between the SDLP and the UUP. There was however, much point scoring. Adams seemed generally under pressure in their questioning by Stephen McBride (Alliance), while Jeffrey Donaldson, following

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the meeting, said to Mr Murphy that the UUP would keep under review their policy of not responding to questions from Sinn Fein.

Strand Three

A very short meeting between the British and Irish delegation was held to approve the consultation paper already prepared by officials. It was agreed to circulate this to parties.

Meeting with the UUP

Mr Murphy met the UUP, led by Jeffrey Donaldson, to discuss the current confidence building measures. Donaldson emphasised that there was a great unease within the community about the impression that there was a steady stream of concessions to Sinn Fein. He cited the ending of internment, Bloody Sunday, prisoners, the failure of the US Administration to include the IRA on its list of terrorist organisations and the PM's handshake with Adams as examples. He was also critical of the decision to allow the Prime Minister to visit Connswater yesterday (the main story in tonight's Belfast Telegraph, prompted by an interview with John Taylor) as playing into the hands of the DUP. The Secretary of State also had a brief meeting with Mr Donaldson along the same lines.

At both meetings Donaldson urged specifically the setting up of a Commission to look at some means of commemorating the victims of the troubles. Mr Murphy suggested Lords Fitt and Mlyneaux as possible members. Donaldson said he could accept this and promised to consult Mr Trimble. The Secretary of State and Mr Murphy agreed to give this some thought and Mr Murphy is to meet Mr Donaldson again tomorrow to go through the UUP list of confidence building measures in more detail. Mr Murphy would be grateful for further advice on the Commission proposal. [Action Mr Leach].

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During her meeting with him, the Secretary of State mentioned the Parades Bill, to confirm that the Clause requested by the UUP had been included on the face of the Bill, although it would not come into force immediately. When pressed by the Secretary of State about exactly what kind of cultural activity was supposed to be covered, Donaldson gave as examples kerb painting, flags and the GAA rule prohibiting the membership of the RUC and Army. He stressed however that the UUP were not intending to use this clause to attack expressions of Nationalist culture, rather they needed it as cover to assist them in persuading the Loyal Orders to co-operate with the Parades Commission.

(Signed)

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