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MEETING WITH ALLIANCE REPRESENTATIVES

1. The following were present at a meeting which took place in Government Buildings, Dublin, from 3.40 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. on the 13th September, 1973:

Mr. Robert Cooper	}	Joint Political Chairmen, Alliance Party
Mr. Oliver Napier		
Mr. John Ferguson)	Assembly Member Belfast North.
Lord Dunleath)	Assembly Member Down North
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Liam Cosgrave, T.D.,)	Taoiseach
James Tully, T.D.,)	Minister for Local Government.
Patrick Donegan, T.D.,)	Minister for Defence.
Mr. Dan O'Sullivan)	Secretary to the Government.
Mr. D. Nally)	Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach.
Mr. C.V. Whelan)	Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs.
Mr. J. Swift)	Counsellor, Department of Foreign Affairs

2. The Taoiseach welcomed the deputation from the Alliance Party to Dublin and congratulated them on their success in the Assembly elections. He mentioned that the Government was anxious to have as many contacts as possible in Northern Ireland; he stated that in this connection a certain confusion seemed to have arisen regarding the terms on which they were then present. The Government had not in fact asked any groups to come to see them to discuss Northern affairs; many groups had been in Dublin, admittedly the chief among them being the S.D.L.P., but all on the basis that they had sought interviews here. In reply, Mr. Napier stated that the Alliance Party were very glad to be in Dublin, and that it was most kind of the Taoiseach and the Ministers present to receive them.

3. Mr. Napier went on to say that the Alliance Party saw the structuring of a Council of Ireland and of a Northern Ireland Executive as equally vital. They wished to talk about both. They had discussed the problems involved in the evolution of both with all the major parties in Northern Ireland, as well as with Mr. Heath and Mr. Whitelaw; they were now in Dublin to discuss them with the Taoiseach. They were extremely strongly in favour of a Council of Ireland; they believed it should have specific functions to carry out, particularly in the social and economic spheres. It should be basically intergovernmental, although there might well be other structures, but fundamentally the intergovernmental tier would be the most important aspect. On this point, the Alliance Party had changed its mind; at one stage they had supported an interparliamentary Council but they now felt that it must have powers in itself to deal with issues. The functions which the Council might have should include Tourism, Electricity and Power, Economic Planning and of Development etc.

4. Mr. Napier then said (and this point was returned to on numerous occasions throughout the discussion) that the Alliance Party disagreed most strongly with the S.D.L.P. (and perhaps with the Government in Dublin) on the question of direct control of the police being vested in the Council of Ireland. They saw this as fundamentally unacceptable to the majority of Unionists; as a consequence, both the Council of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive would fail if this point was pushed. There would be in any event a difficulty in selling a Council of Ireland to the Unionist majority; it could not be sold if it included powers over the police. There could certainly be a role under the Council of Ireland for an Advisory Council on security; but this Council, emphatically, should not have a controlling function.

5. The Alliance Party also believed that along with the above powers and functions, the Council of Ireland should have an

inbuilt capacity for growth. This growth could develop in line with the building up of trust between the parties in Northern Ireland and between North and South. They had had many discussions with the S.D.L.P. on a Council of Ireland; they were almost in total agreement on the subject except for the matter of control of security. Mr. Napier went on to say that the pledged Unionists, which were not a very cohesive body, accepted in general the idea of an intergovernmental Council of Ireland. The Unionists believed that the Council should be mainly consultative but their resistance to having certain functions granted to the Council was not extreme. While they were malleable on this point, they did not consider the question of control over the police as one that they could discuss in any circumstances. They might even accept an Advisory Council on security but they would not move further than that. As far as Alliance was concerned, they believed that security must remain for the present with Westminster; it could not be devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly unless and until power sharing was working and seen to be working without difficulty. If, in the future, the Assembly agreed that security functions should be transferred to a Council of Ireland, Alliance would have no objection.

6. Mr. Napier closed his opening remarks by stating that his party was opposed to internment without trial. At the same time, they considered it unrealistic to hold that no talks should take place towards forming the Executive as long as internment lasted. They will be asking the British authorities for concessions on internment what they have in mind are ameliorative rather than radical measures - i.e. that most of the persons now in Compound 8 be released.

7. Mr. Cooper then took up the question of the police about which his party had spoken both to the Unionists and to the S.D.L.P. He thought it fair to say that Alliance understood the position on both sides on the matter. According to the S.D.L.P., the R.U.C. had

traditionally been an arm of the Unionist party; it was discredited by a number of incidents; the S.D.L.P. had to be in a position to advise its supporters to join the police and this was very difficult for it at present due to the absolute non-acceptability of the R.U.C. in certain areas. The Unionists, on the other hand, felt that their control of the R.U.C. had been broken, that the force was now been run by an impartial police authority, that it was under the direction of Westminster and that a majority, or at least a substantial number of members of the force had joined only within the last 3 or 4 years. It was difficult to find common ground between these two positions. The Unionists insisted on viewing the S.D.L.P. line on the police as merely a political gimmick, devoid of substance; they found in it a deliberate ploy to destroy the police, as the B. Specials, Stormont, etc. had been destroyed earlier. The Unionists fail to see that the S.D.L.P. were just as interested in an efficient police as they were, perhaps even more interested since their (S.D.L.P.) supporters suffered most from the absence of an efficient police force.

8. The Alliance Party believed that the police authority must be a more high-powered body; it had done good work but its value had not been publicly recognised. A positive aggressive role for the police authority would be a must in the future. They saw the appointment of the new chief constable as a dramatic change. They felt that there were two matters which the Unionists would not even discuss in relation to the police - a change of name and the granting of control to a Council of Ireland. The S.D.L.P. had more flexibility than the Unionists in this matter and can afford to make greater concessions. They do not have to "watch their rear" since no Catholic party in the Assembly is to the left of them. Faulkner, on the other hand, has a real difficulty. If a change of name and control by the Council are pushed, it will be impossible to form an Executive; this would represent the major disaster for both parts of Ireland.

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9. There was then some discussion on general political developments in Northern Ireland. An Executive could only be formed from the S.D.L.P., Unionist and Alliance parties; no other groups had either the power or an interest in forming part of the Executive. Within the Unionist party there were 3 or 4 members who could not be relied on at all; they would quite possibly leave on the principle of sharing power with Republicans. The position of 10 others was ambiguous while the remaining 6 or 7 could be considered unshakeable in any circumstances. Bradford is not a credible potential leader at present since he cannot deliver the unpledged Unionists as a body. Mr. Faulkner wants the Executive formed, he will go a long way in order to obtain the position of Chief Executive and he personally will find difficulty with questions of the police rather than of the Council. Mr. Faulkner is not a folk hero of Alliance; but the party believes that he is the only credible person as Chief Executive. He is flexible, he wants to make the Executive work and he is the best judge of what his own supporters will take. Lord Dunleath said that an insistence on what was not feasible as regards the police would "kibosh" both the Northern Ireland Executive and the Council of Ireland. Although it went against the grain, the Alliance wished to make things as easy as possible for Faulkner. If he is pushed out, the Extremists will take control over the shattered forces of Unionism. Between unpledged Unionists, VUPP and DUP, the right wing now commands about 25 votes; a dozen further votes, and the swing this would entail, would probably give them a majority in the Assembly. If the anti-Executive members were a majority, Britain would have no choice within the terms of the Constitution Act, except to suspend the Assembly; the outcome of this would either be a further period of direct rule or new elections after a short interval.

10. Next, the Alliance spokesman raised the questions of extradition and recognition. On Extradition, they said they appreciated it was a matter for the Courts and that there was no direct Government role. As against this, when viewed from outside the Republic, the matter was a political question and not one of legalities. Was there perhaps, a case for new legislation in this area? Could "political offences" be redefined? The whole Extradition issue was somewhere between a major and a minor irritant for the people of Northern Ireland; it was a minor irritant for all, except those who supported violence and a major political instrument in the hands of the extreme Loyalists. On the Recognition issue, they would be blunt and say they did not particularly like Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution. At the same time they understood how difficult it would be for the Government here to have these Articles changed. They also appreciated that it was not easy to define what exactly was meant by "recognition". Mr. Cooper said that the Taoiseach's July second statement was most helpful. The Alliance Party believed that the ^{South} should publicly accept Section I of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act; this might be done by judicious and unambiguous public statements. In fact, we had come very close to this already in enunciating the doctrines that the eventual unity of Ireland must come by consent.

11. Mr. John Ferguson asked why the Republic always under-sold itself. We should be aware that we have the best Horticultural Research Station in the British Isles at Kinsealy. Dr. Robertson, his graduates and projects were second to none. Similarly, the work of Bord na Mona, the Land Reclamation Schemes, the Industrial Development Programmes, were all first-class institutions. We were all very ignorant of what went on on the other side of the border; a greater diffusion of knowledge would be most helpful. In this sense, a Council of Ireland was not only desirable, it was absolutely necessary in order to share valuable expertise. On the question of the police authority, he believed that its members had

been faceless men, they did a good job but had not made themselves known at all. He understood that one-third approximately of the R.U.C. had joined within the last 4 years; this gave him great hope for the future since the full effect of the new intake would not be felt for some years yet. Mr. Ferguson also mentioned that he had visited Long Kesh the previous week and had spent eight hours there. He said that one would have to shed tears at the sight of so many young lives hardened and destroyed by the awful curse of political sickness. It was most necessary that internment without trial be done away with and that the human needs of the prisoners, including their educational needs, be given top priority.

12. The Taoiseach again said how much pleasure it gave him and his Ministers to welcome the Alliance representatives to Dublin and to hear their presentation of interesting and important facts and arguments. He regarded the meeting as most useful; even if they had not been specifically invited to Dublin, he could say that the Government here had been anxious to have such meetings. He was most impressed by the way in which they had dealt with various matters.

13. On extradition, the Taoiseach said that we recognised the difficulties involved, particularly the difficulties of delay and we could well understand how this would be a major or minor irritant to people in the North. Extradition was a matter for the Courts, as it was in both Britain and the North. Recently at the end of July we had introduced new rules of procedure the effect of which would be to expedite cases. Our definition of a political offence was almost exactly the same as in Britain. At the recent International Conference on Extradition in The Hague, following the deaths in Munich, there was some agreement that the definition of "political" in regard to Extradition should be substantially reviewed. However the British Government opposed any change. Mr. Napier asked whether the State can bring on cases in extradition matters.

The Taoiseach explained the procedures involved and said that in some cases the R.U.C. had their legal technicalities wrong, or there was not a similar charge in this jurisdiction etc. We were anxious to have the procedures speeded up as much as possible. The Alliance accepted this and said they would wait to see how the new procedures worked out before commenting further. On the question of possible changes in our Constitution, the Taoiseach said that they were grave difficulties involved. As the visitors would know, we had reconstituted an All-Party Committee whose report was awaited. A recommendation from this Committee would have a greater chance of acceptance than one put forward independently. The Government was looking forward to receiving the report and hoped it would form the basis for any necessary changes; the whole area, however, was most difficult.

14. The Taoiseach then said that he had found the account of Mr. Faulkner's political difficulties very interesting. How strong, he wondered, was Mr. Faulkner personally against an S.D.L.P. presence in a Coalition? The view of the Alliance members was that Mr. Faulkner was essentially a realist and a pragmatist. He dislike some members of the S.D.L.P. more than others and in particular would have difficulty in getting along with John Hume. They had discussed this question with Faulkner and they believed unequivocally that he would accept the power-sharing arrangement with the S.D.L.P. moreover, he would take into the Executive any member nominated by the S.D.L.P. Party and accepted by Whitelaw. Paisley, Craig and their followers see the Council as a sellout; 90% of the Unionists and even Faulkner himself realises that participation in a Council brings unity a step closer. Although he can be attacked on his participation in a Council, Mr. Faulkner will accept it because (a) the British want it (b) because it is part of the price he will pay for being Chief Executive and (c) because he is genuinely anxious for co-operation on social and economic matters.

15. The Taoiseach then asked how acceptable would Mr. Faulkner be as a Chief Executive? The Alliance members said they would accept him reluctantly but they realised that the degree of reluctance was even stronger within the S.D.L.P. However, they believed that eventually the S.D.L.P. would accept Faulkner as Chief Executive member. A large factor in their acceptance, as in that of the Alliance, would be a realisation that Faulkner is the only possible candidate who would be totally effective in that position. Once appointed, he would fight his corner and be put in a position of defending the changes which would have to occur. Moreover, since he would probably not accept any other position on the Executive except that of Chief, his opposition could be decisive in ruining the chances of an Executive being formed. At the same time, Mr. Faulkner's personality was a major stumbling block; both Alliance and S.D.L.P. would wish for a different Chief Executive if it were in any way possible.

16. Mr. Napier went on to say that the major problems facing all parties in forming an Executive were the Council of Ireland, the police and Mr. Faulkner's personality. Of these, the biggest single problem was the police and the problems there concerned the name of the force and who should control it. In their talks with other parties (the implication here was unmistakable that the Alliance Party was actively mediating between the Unionists and the S.D.L.P.) the greatest area of rigidity and the most unalterable positions were to be found on the police questions. Alliance had got no distance whatsoever in bridging this gap. Alliance opposes all-party talks on the police, as proposed by the S.D.L.P. Any such talks will be wrecked by Paisley and Craig and a breakdown after 30 minutes in such a Conference would put back the objective of achieving agreement further than ever. They would prefer to see a Conference of potential participants in an Executive only. Such a Conference could discuss the police but also all other points likely to be in dispute regarding the formation of an Executive, the setting up of a Council

of Ireland, etc. Such talks should be held with an open agenda and without preconditions.

17. Mr. Donegan asked what would happen if the S.D.L.P. absolutely refused to accept Mr. Faulkner as Chief Executive? Alliance members said that this would be a disaster and might possibly mean that no Executive could be formed. Mr. Faulkner is the only choice; the only other possible alternative (within the Unionist Party) is Mr. Bradford and he could only become Chief Executive if he had earlier become head of the Unionist Party. He is not likely to become head of the Unionist Party because (a) he could not deliver the pledged Unionists and (b) he is hopeless at the despatch box. While he is a good speaker and debater, he is very poor in defending a brief and loses his temper far too easily. There would be no confidence whatsoever in him as head of the party. Mr. Tully then asked if it was the position that no one, other than Faulkner, would be acceptable as Chief Executive? The Alliance confirmed that this was their understanding of the position. There is no chance that a representative of the S.D.L.P. could become Chief Executive. They agreed that the question of a name for the R.U.C. was a very theoretical question but held, nevertheless, that there was a real and divisive matter at issue there. As far as the Alliance Party is concerned, it could not care less what name was given to a reformed force. Mr. Tully pressed the point that surely some compromise name might be acceptable to both sides. The Taoiseach then asked whether the formation of an Executive would not help the Unionist Party to hold together better. Mr. Cooper confirmed that it would. In reply to a further question from the Taoiseach regarding internment, the Alliance group said that they would like to see most of the prisoners in Compound 8 released; yet they felt that the "conversion" of some prisoners in Compound 8 to an anti-I.R.A. position must be quite doubtful. The Taoiseach said that he understood the general reply of the British to question on this point was that (a) they had released all those whom it was

safe to release and (b) those parties making representations for further releases used different lists, without synchronisation of the names involved. He felt that these answers were unsatisfactory and there had got to be a "give" in the matter without further delay.

18. During the discussions, the Taoiseach checked with the Alliance members regarding their wishes on Press publicity for the visit. They accepted the standard form of Press release which had been prepared in Dublin. When the discussions were finished, Mr. Cooper and Mr. Napier did separate television interviews for R.T.E. and U.T.V. and also gave an off-the-record briefing to the political correspondents of The Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Press and London Times. After the meeting, there was some further discussions over drinks and, later on, the Alliance representatives were brought to dinner by Mr. O'Sullivan, Mr. Whelan and Mr. Swift.