



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Ian Paisley's address to the DUP Annual Conference30 November 1991Talks Process

1. Mr. Paisley's speech to the DUP Annual Conference, when taken together with reports on the recent meeting between the two Unionist leaders and Secretary of State Brooke gives, us a somewhat clearer picture of Unionist tactics as regards the talks process.
2. Like other parties, the DUP is, in theory, very much in favour of the talks process beginning immediately and does not believe, in theory, that the general election in Britain should delay the process. However, it seeks a "new basis" for the talks.
3. In spelling out the "new basis" for talks, Paisley repeated the familiar three prior conditions of the Unionist leaders
 - (a) The talks would be aimed at seeking an alternative to and a replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.
 - (b) No Anglo-Irish Conference meeting during the negotiations.
 - (c) The suspension of the working of the Secretariat in servicing the Anglo-Irish Conference.
4. These three pre-conditions by the Unionist were accommodated in the 26 March compromise basis of the talks, and arguably Paisley is seeking nothing new in his reiteration of them. However, his language in relation to the 'gap' may signify a hardening of position.
5. In his speech Mr. Paisley said: "You all know why the talks came to an end. The Irish Government refused to keep faith and determined to have an Anglo-Irish Conference, come what may". He went on to call for "a

categorical assurance" that there will be no meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference during the talks. This may imply that the DUP is retreating to a demand for an unlimited or flexible gap, the length of which would be based upon the length of time the talks take.

6. In what was presumably a reference to Strand Two, Mr. Paisley said "...the entanglements of the Anglo-Irish Agreement with Dublin must be broken... But that is not coming in the first part of the talks. That can only come when we get to the point where progress has been made towards a settlement within Northern Ireland". This is a distinct echo of the pre 26 March Unionist negotiating stance of substantial progress being required in Strand One before Strand Two could begin.
7. The initiation of Strand One on the basis being outlined by the Unionists would of course allow them to string out the process in the hope that a general election would, whatever outcome, produce a new scenario, while at the same time the functioning of the Anglo-Irish Agreement would have been undermined and thus appear less useful to a new British Government of whatever hue. This "stringing out" interpretation of Unionists tactics is further underlined by Mr. Paisley's agreement with UUP leader Molyneaux that Strand One talks should take place at Westminster between "elected leaders of constitutional parties". It must be also be considered alongside a reported suggestion by the Unionists to Secretary of State Brooke that such Westminster talks would be of a fairly low intensity.
8. In sum, the joint Unionist tactics would now seem to be as follows:
 - (i) Sound very positive about talks.
 - (ii) Seek a basis for Strand One that would allow for an open-ended gap between Conference meetings.

- (iii) Prolong Strand One for as long as possible with low intensity and possibly essentially functional talks at Westminster - away from fundamentals and focusing on the "governance of Northern Ireland".
- (iv) Hope that the length of the talks and the British general election would result in the Anglo-Irish Agreement process being sidelined.
- (v) Having achieved that, seek a new talks process with a new British Government based upon the Anglo-Irish Agreement completely in suspension.

Other Points

- 9. Other points of interest in the Paisley's speech included his support of the view of Peter Robinson that the Union was in danger as long as the Anglo-Irish Agreement remained and his rejection of "Republicans" sharing in the shaping and controlling of the constitutional future. Mr. Paisley also said that the Irish Government would have to "abolish" Articles 2 and 3 for talks to succeed and that there would be no concession from Unionists in return.
- 10. The context of Mr. Paisley's speech - the heated atmosphere of a DUP Conference - must of course be kept in mind. As usual Mr. Paisley's address was heavily spiced with anti-Catholic and Anti-Nationalist invective, e.g.: "the aims of Cardinal Daly are one and the same as the objectives of the IRA..." and "That claim [Article 2] was the claim of the murderer de Valera".
- 11. Reports from the Conference suggest that, in line with the prevailing atmosphere, William McCrea and his diehard approach again received the backing of party members while Peter Robinson was more isolated than ever.

MF
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