



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2021/45/208
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

17, GROSVENOR PLACE,

SW1X 7HR

Telephone: 071-235 2171

TELEX: 916104

Fax: 071-245 6961

Confidential

18 April 1991

Mr. Dermot Gallagher  
Assistant Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division

Dear Assistant Secretary

A conversation with Frank Millar

I had a lengthy conversation with Frank Millar yesterday about the forthcoming talks process.

The following were among the points of interest which he made:

Composition of delegations

- Millar's understanding is that the personal preference of both Unionist leaders would have been to take part in the talks without any party colleagues in attendance.
- This position, however, would have been very difficult for them to sustain. Hearing that Paisley was thinking along these lines, Peter Robinson "stirred things up" in the DUP and, by Millar's account, forced the leader to accept a DUP delegation of six. This in turn forced Molyneaux (who could not allow the DUP's representation to be larger than the OUP's) to announce a OUP delegation of six.
- Molyneaux has chosen a team, however, which should give him maximum freedom for manoeuvre. Bowing to the various echelons of command within the OUP, he has taken with him the Chairman of the party (Nicholson) and the President of the Ulster Unionist Council (Cunningham). His calculation, according to Millar's sources, is that Nicholson (a devolutionist) will be prevented by EP business from regular attendance at the talks. In any

1. cc PST; PRM  
H. Nally; PR  
H. Brown; H. Baulk  
C. Miller AT &  
Box  
2. Mr. C. Roussier

event, Nicholson is hardly a formidable opponent for Molyneux. Cunningham, in contrast, is an integrationist and Molyneux will be happy to have him at his side.

- Molyneux could hardly omit Martin Smyth (on grounds of seniority) but he has a poor opinion of Smyth's political judgement and he is unlikely to be seeking much advice from him. Trimble has been included, Millar understands, as the leader's "constitutional adviser" (i.e. to prepare his interventions on Articles 2 and 3). Maginnis, whom he would have liked to (but finally could not) exclude, has been included in the team but it has been made clear to him that his brief will be Articles 2 and 3 and nothing else.
- Taylor has been deliberately excluded. Noting his public complaint that the UUC had been kept in the dark, Millar commented that Taylor is once again "twisting and turning" in his perpetual bid to succeed Molyneux as leader. Contradicting the various signals of flexibility which he has hitherto given in relation to the process, Taylor now seems intent on positioning himself "to the right" of Molyneux. He may well observe the proceedings sourly from the sidelines, trying to embarrass Molyneux from time to time with warnings that he is out of step with the grassroots.

#### Venues

- Millar's expectation (with which, he claimed, the NIO privately concurs) is that Stormont will be the venue for both the first and second strands of talks.
- He believes that the Secretary of State will at some stage put it to the Minister for Foreign Affairs that, for practical reasons, it would be simpler to hold both of these strands in the same venue. He will argue that the security problems in bringing the various participants South for the second strand would be formidable. He may also note that, with two or more strands in progress simultaneously, it would be more convenient to have a single venue for the first two strands at least. He will presume that the Irish side will not "go to the wall" on a Southern venue for the second strand once it is clear that a venue within the island of Ireland is envisaged. Millar speculated that, as a quid pro quo, the British might offer Dublin as the venue for the third strand.

#### Duration

- Commenting that the Unionists would refuse to take part in any talks over the Twelfth period, Millar speculated that the gap for the talks would terminate a day or two prior to 12 July.

- He understands that the NIO envisage that participants will be engaged in the talks for the first three days of each week, with Thursdays left free inter alia for Commons business.

#### Media arrangements

- The NIO, according to Millar, plans to make a room available to the media within the precincts of Stormont Castle. Beyond that, he understands, there are plans for "tea and biscuits and nothing else".

#### Substance

- Millar engaged in considerable speculation about the scope for agreement during the first strand. His overall view, however, is that Molyneaux will prove unequal to the challenge which these talks present and that the process will, therefore, fail.
- Drawing on ideas contained in a document prepared by the two Unionist parties in 1987, Millar sketched out the possible Unionist thinking on a devolved Assembly. (This ten-page document, which arose in the wake of the Task Force report, has never been published; a three-page summary of it, however, was presented to Tom King in 1987-88 in the form of an alternative Agreement).
- In 1987 the Unionists envisaged a single-tier Assembly with a system of committees covering the various portfolios to be devolved. While Molyneaux will stick initially to his more modest proposal for one or more regional Councils involving purely administrative devolution, Millar believes that he could be nudged towards a more flexible interpretation of "administrative" which would narrow the distance between him and the DUP.
- He would accept, for example, that the new body would be free to allocate funds in accordance with NI's specific needs and priorities, i.e., it would back approaches in certain areas which would be divergent from those at Westminster. To please the DUP, who would like to be able to point to a "legislative" element in a new body, he might well agree that the committees would be empowered to scrutinise legislative proposals in advance of their consideration at Westminster.
- There is no doubt, however, that the role of the committees would not go beyond consultation.
- Millar expects that the SDLP will have little interest in a body which has no legislative powers. At the very least, their interest would have to be stimulated by offering them generous representation on the various committees. Millar himself would offer them "half of the

available jobs" in order to coax them into the Assembly. He is fairly certain, however, that both Paisley and Molyneaux would baulk at this - even though maximising the offer to the SDLP in the internal talks would give the Unionists their best chance of reducing the 'Irish dimension'.

- Security, in Millar's view, is the key to a possible agreement. Unionists ought to be trying to retrieve from the Anglo-Irish Conference the one area of greatest concern to them and on which the Irish Government's representations have caused the greatest sensitivity. Noting that Robinson and others in the DUP would like to see security responsibility transferred to a devolved Assembly, and combining with this remarks occasionally made by SDLP figures in private on the same subject, Millar wondered whether a situation could arise in which Molyneaux would be put under pressure to abandon his long-standing antipathy to such a move. He speculated that the OUP leader might reluctantly agree to a consultative role on security matters for a security committee of a new Assembly - knowing that full operational and policy responsibility would continue to lie with the British Government and the security chiefs.
- As for the positions of the British and Irish Governments on this subject, Millar speculated that, with both Governments realising that no real responsibility for security was being transferred to the Assembly, this move might find acceptance. From the Irish Government's point of view, compensation for the removal of security from the competence of the A-I Conference and its formal transfer to an Assembly should be provided by the prospect of securing full Unionist acquiescence to the continuation of the present Anglo-Irish Agreement for all issues which were not devolved.
- Millar, who was conscious of the flimsy and speculative nature of his argument, acknowledged a large measure of wishful thinking on his part (going back to his Task Force days). He remains firmly of the view that there will be no radical thinking from either Unionist leader and that agreement is unlikely to be forthcoming between the parties in the first strand. Our conversation concluded with Millar speculating on the precise grounds which Molyneaux would advance for a walkout from the internal talks. He thought it possible that, responding to Hume's insistence

on the three relationships, Molyneaux (despite his own acceptance of the latter) might complain that the SDLP is refusing to work within the Union and that it is therefore impossible to discuss devolution with them.

Yours sincerely

*David Donoghue.*

David Donoghue  
Press and Information Officer