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To HQ
For A.Anderson

From London
From B.McMahon

The following for your information is a copy of a transcript of the joint press conference of Mr Paisley and Mr Molyneux after their meeting with the Secretary of State on 20 September. I am afraid there are some unavoidable gaps, as the conference was a bit confused in places with both Paisley and Molyneux talking at the same time with the result that neither could be heard.

Transcript of Press Conference given by Ian Paisley
and Jim Molyneux following their meeting with the
Secretary of State on 20 September 1991

Jim Molyneux

We did indicate to you, and it will come as no surprise, that we intended to put at the top of the agenda the hideous problems of increasing murder in Northern Ireland and we are not making that a precondition to anything else. We are simply saying that as we sit here today this is the most important subject as far as the people of Northern Ireland are concerned. We had to put candidly to the Secretary of State what we have discovered on our respective trips along the frontier region of Northern Ireland over the past two or three months when other people have been on holidays, that whatever the protestations and boasts may be about improved security, that seems to exist only at Belfast-Dublin level. For one reason or another it does not seem to transmit itself down to the frontier region itself. That's no reflection on the security forces in the south - it may be that they don't have the resources; it may mean that they have an enormous amount of territory to cover, more than they can cope with; but what we did have a duty to explain to the Secretary of State and explain to you is that it simply is not real to go around fooling the world into believing that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has led to greatly improved security in Northern

Ireland. You only have to look at the statistics - truly alarming statistics - in the way that the figures have more than doubled, and almost trebled, since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. The latest statistics are truly horrifying and we did draw attention to the fact that for the first time for many many years the so-called Loyalist terrorists appear to be even more effective than the IRA in their dastardly deeds and that doesn't augur well for the immediate future and is an additional reason why action has to be taken in the very near future.

We did feel compelled to stress to the Secretary of State that members of her Majesty's Government should think very carefully before they made ambiguous statements such as the favourite ritual expression that "we want to make it quite clear", say they, "that we have no selfish vested interest in economic or strategic terms in remaining in Northern Ireland". Because that message - whether it is intended or not to be beam'd at the IRA - it is a fact that the IRA and the so-called Loyalists are the only people who listen to it. And what they are saying is that "well we the IRA are engaged in the campaign to force the Brits out", Her Majesty's Government appear to them to be saying: "well, we would like to get out as soon as we can" - so that they have in fact established a sort of common ground. I think we made that point fairly forcefully and I think it will be acted upon.

Ian Paisley

Well I would say that it was a blunt and very forthright exchange as far as security is concerned and we will be meeting the Secretary of State again, both our parties, on this issue of security. As Mr Molyneux has rightly said we were not making this a precondition for any talks. But we were saying that the situation is very very serious in Northern Ireland at the present time. We are not at all happy about the way the Secretary of State has handled it. I did mention and Mr Molyneux has already mentioned about the statements that he had made about having no selfish interest.

I raised the statements that he made that they couldn't give security to the people of Northern Ireland, all the people of Northern Ireland, and in the context in which he said he would make an appeal to paramilitaries to stop killing one another and I said by so doing he was throwing people into the hands of the paramilitaries, who are saying "well if the Government cannot protect us who are going to protect us"? And I pointed out that the outburst of Mr Mawhinney about telling them to leave off their balaclava helmets and to tell the people of Northern Ireland and indeed the whole of Ireland what their agenda was. As a man said to me at the funeral of one of my constituents yesterday - the police officer who was murdered in Swatragh - he said "here's the agenda, death, that is their agenda".

I said that these sort of statements don't help at all in any matter. I also raised the matter of the terrible happenings at the border which included the attack on the home of the Nelson family and nobody from the Northern Ireland Office has even been there to this day to say to the people what sort of security they are going to give them. While I am meeting Lord Belsted with those families next week I thought that it was terrible that in that situation nothing was done. And as Mr Molyneaux again has said we know that at the border there is not security because the IRA were able for one hour to hold up all traffic, 30 armed IRA men and yet that never infiltrated through to the British forces on the other side. Where the guards were I don't know. Where the Irish army was I don't know. But that is what happened.

I think the other matter which is very important is that we presented to the Secretary of State his speech in the House of Commons. You know we have been savaged by men like Dr. Alderdice and others by saying we want to change the rules but this is what he said and we read it to him - "For myself I hope that it will prove possible in due course to have further exchanges with the parties and with the Irish Government to explore initially on a bilateral basis whether we can establish terms on which fresh discussions could be held" ;

and at the same exchange he said this: "I hope that if I approach the parties a little later this year about the possibility of entering talks again, of starting fresh talks, I shall receive the same warm welcome as on a previous occasion. We shall meet to renegotiate the basis on which we do so."

This is not Ian Paisely or Jim Molyneaux, this is the Secretary of State in the House of Commons telling us "we shall meet to renegotiate the basis on which we do so". And he goes further, "all", and this includes Dr Alderdice, John Hume and all that were at the talks, "All those who have taken part in the talks so far think that we may wish to vary some of the elements on procedure" So the proposal to have a fresh basis was accepted, and indeed, put on record by the Secretary of State himself,

But the amazing thing that has developed is that Mr Collins wants to change the goal posts completely and he said, and I am quoting from the Belfast Telegraph, a very reliable publication of September 14, '91, and of course this was confirmed in other papers - I am not just give giving them the blame for this - Mr Collins insisted that inter-party negotiations must be under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Now there is an ultimatum from Dublin in the future we must talk under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Well we told the Secretary of State that Mr Collins must publicly repudiate that. We will not talk and never have talked under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and that was clear and of course the Secretary of State admitted that the talks were not under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and he said he would take instant action on that matter. So there can be no talks until that is clarified. We do feel that the way forward now is for us to have in this forum, and this is the parliamentary forum, we can meet Government Ministers here and we can enter into discussions to see can we get that basis. The three leaders of the main parties are here and the Secretary of State can talk to them and we feel that that's his duty now, to talk to the three

party leaders and see can we get this basis which he himself has discussed.

Mr. Molyneux

There was a little bit of missing evidence which may have been made public before, that on the day before Mr Brooke announced Her Majesty's Government's decision to wind up the talks and the decision was theirs, probably taken over here the previous week. He met the four party leaders on that afternoon of the 2nd July and he said: "I just wanted to inform you that we have decided to wind up the talks in an orderly fashion so that perhaps I or a successor may be able to build on what has been already achieved but", he said, "not in this type of forum" and then lately he reminded me of my words "not on the high wire act", so that indicates that Mr Paisley has said that there is common ground between the three of us - the

Secretary of State, and the two of us - that we see no merit, any of us, and he was the first to say that, in going back and resuming a structure of talks which had manifestly proved to be faulty and defective. So that is on that basis that we would be seeking to go forward and it seems natural to avoid the kind of situation, a repeat of the kind of situation, which I was thinking the other day would be laughed to scorn here if for example the Secretary of State for Scotland were to invite to Mr Kinnock, Mr Ashdown, Mrs Ewing, Mr Paisley and me to go to Edinburgh for three months to talk about Scottish devolution. Talking should be done here. This is where we are all elected to represent the views of our people and put forward views. So I agree with the Secretary of State and I agree with what Mr Paisley has said - we have a duty which we will fulfil of discussing at any time with Mr Brooke or any of Her Majesty's Ministers the ways and means of improving the Governance of Northern Ireland.

Reporter Does this mean that the round-table talks are then at a total end, Alliance Party?

Mr. Molyneux

The Harland and Wolfe operation on which I model many of these suggestions, that the three parliamentary parties meeting initially with the then Secretary of State, Mr. King, and then meeting the Prime Minister for a major summit and persuading the Prime Minister (rather out of charter to do for Harland & Wolfe what she flatly refused to do for Sunderland and roughly the same week) so that its development of that very natural pattern of consultations and moving forward. It sets an example for politicians here because we would like to see the day come when Mr. Major and Mr. Kinnock and Mr. Ashdown would sit down around the table and talk about the health service - we would be prepared to co-chair that meeting wouldn't we?

Reporter But will that exclude the Alliance Party if you have the talks at Westminster?

Mr. Molyneux

They could put in their input through bilateral talks, but in the context of parliamentary affairs, it has got to be those who are elected by the people of Northern Ireland to serve them in parliament and if they have taken their seats of course, one has not taken his seat so he is not ...

Mr. Paisley

The other thing is that the talks about talks, and first of all we have to get the basis, the Secretary of State did not talk to the Alliance Party at all..... we feel that if we are to get this basis if the Secretary of State says we must have it then its up to him to use this parliamentary forum to get it and that is the reasonable way to do it and the other thing of course talking about the Alliance Party, if the Alliance Party must be at the table, and that is what people are saying then I would say the opposition parties must be at the table in the South of Ireland when we come to talk about unscrambling of the Anglo-Irish Agreement as it refers to the Irish Republic. There are many people in South of Ireland who

perhaps would see a lot clearer with the Unionists on Articles 2 and 3. So if you are going to say Alliance Party because they more or less back up the SDLP that they should sit at the table, then you have to have it both ways.

But we are not talking about the talks as such at the moment we are talking about getting the basis for the talks and the basis for the talks are not on the basis of Mr Collins suggestion and he has got to repudiate that. We will not talk under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. We never heard of that proposal ever being put before and we have taken up his challenge and there will be no talks until that is off the table. He now publicly has to repudiate what he's given to Northern Ireland and try to stick down my throat as an elected representative that you will talk under the Anglo Irish Agreement.

Mr. Molyneux

I think it is fair to say that the Secretary of State was at one with us and our recollection that we clearly understood all three of us, that we were not during that period talking under the auspices of the Anglo Irish Agreement which had been suspended for the express purpose of enabling discussions to take place.

Mr. Paisley

He accepted that without any question of it, he was very alarmed today when we brought his attention to it.

Reporter

Given that it took so long to establish the basis for the earlier talks and that because of what Collins has now said that is compounding the difficulties that we have been getting back to the basis of discussing what the talks should be about and how it should be conducted, it seems unlikely to most reasonable people that these talks have any chance at all of getting off the ground because the election is going to intervene sooner or later and neither of you two will want to put yourselves in jeopardy before an election.

Mr. Paisley

We don't worry about putting ourselves in jeopardy. We were the people that initiated these talks. Mr. Molyneaux and me are the people who initiated the talks. We are now seeking to initiate in getting these conditions met but he himself has said, what must be. We did not put ourselves in jeopardy at all. I would repudiate that remark. I don't think that politicians put themselves in jeopardy by doing what is right and we did absolutely what was right, we were by the Southern Government, who said we are going to have an Irish Conference and we said you are not going to have an Irish Conference while we are talking, and we made that clear.

Mr. Molyneaux

The general election issue doesn't enter into my considerations either because we have a duty to do what we think is right for the people in Northern Ireland, not just the ones who elected us, and that we are determined to do and in earnest of that we did say that election or no election that the bilateral talks ought to get underway with the least possible delay. We did point out that we are within three weeks of Parliament resuming its activities and that that would be the natural time when the real nitty gritty talks should begin - as early as that.

Reporter ..

Did you raise the possibility of a gap in the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. Paisley

He said that that was taken for granted, that would have to be a real break and also that Maryfield would have to cease its operations, and he knows will not talk without that.

Reporter:

What would be a real break?

Mr. Paisley:

Well we didn't go onto the length of that. I will tell you what the real break is in Mr. Molyneaux's view and my view, is time sufficient to do the job. If matters arise that I call injury time that must be taken into consideration, we must have time to do the job. And let me just put one question to you: what good did the 16th July do?

Mr. Molyneaux

We had the same standard communique which roughly the same wording has been dished out in the aftermath of every single meeting of the Conference. The juxtaposition of the paragraphs is a wee bit different admittedly, but apart from that it was the usual.

Mr. Paisley

If it hadn't been, We could have continued with the Secretary of State.

Reporter:

Could I be clear about what you are actually want to happen ? Do you favour a formal setting where the three party leaders are meeting the Secretary of State on the basis that you are all representing your constituents?

Mr Paisley:

Mr Molyneaux and myself would welcome the fullest publicity because the last time you will note that it was not Mr Molyneaux and me making statements at Stormont. There was many people making statements but it wasn't the leaders that were making the statements. We welcomed the breakthrough when we could tell the people of Northern Ireland what actually has happened. We don't anything secret at all but there will have to be informal talks to get this thing resolved.....
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Reporter:

Why don't you think the talks can resume where they left off?

Mr Paisley:

You had better ask the Secretary of State, he says they cant. You have that statement "we shall need to renegotiate the basis on which we do so".

Reporter :

Is there enough good-will at this time for the talks to proceed?

Mr Paisley:

I don't accept that they floundered. They were brought to an end by Mr Collins and the Secretary of State. We didn't bring them to an end. We were still at the table and he called us in and told us he was bringing them to an end.

Reporter:

What are the effects of the tit - for - tat killings?

Mr Paisley:

Very very serious. We are in a very serious position and we told him that in no uncertain manner. We have to talk to him again about security.

Reporter:

Have you set a date for another meeting?

Mr Paisley:

No.