



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Secret (limited circulation)

Meeting with SDLP

Belfast, 30 April 1991

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1. Following their meeting with Mr. Brooke yesterday morning, Mr. Gallagher and I had lunch with the SDLP team (Hume, Mallon, McGrady, Hendron) in Belfast yesterday. The meeting with Mr. Brooke (who was accompanied by Minister Mawhinney and a total of eight civil servants) had lasted an hour and a half and focussed almost exclusively on the agenda for the first strand and the venue for the second strand.

Agenda

2. On the agenda, the SDLP had handed over the paper at Annex 1 attached (basically setting out the following sequence - Declaration, Realities, Requirements arising from realities, Pause for consideration and analysis, Proposals for new structures). For their part, the British had described orally the kind of agenda they had in mind (see Annex 2). The SDLP had argued strongly against the British approach on the grounds that it fails to provide for the necessary analysis of the problem and is too focused on devolution; Hume said he felt the Secretary of State was impressed by and sympathetic to the SDLP arguments.
3. The understanding is that the Secretary of State will listen to each of the parties and then draw up a draft agenda in the light of views expressed. The SDLP is not entirely clear whether there will be further consultation at that stage - Hume feels that Mr. Brooke will come back to the parties whereas McGrady's view is that the new agenda will be presented more or less on a 'take it or leave it' basis.

#### Venue for Second Strand

4. The SDLP argued strongly for Dublin as the venue for the second strand; they reiterated their strong hesitation about Stormont as the site for the internal talks (this was reinforced by their encounter yesterday - in full view of the media - with a DUP protestor who had been allowed access by the police) and emphasised that they saw this as part of a package which would include Dublin as the location for the second strand. Mr. Brooke responded that he proposed to try to sell a Dublin-London rotation to the Unionists (he did not mention the possibility of Armagh for a ceremonial opening); the SDLP continued to stress their preference for Dublin.

#### Other Procedural Issues

5. The Secretary of State envisages five hours of meetings per day; no mention was made of any sub-committees being established. (The SDLP made clear to us that they would be adamantly opposed to sub-committees - "therein lies the road to ruin"). It is understood that the opening plenary session next Tuesday morning will be confined to statements by the party leaders, with no time limit on the length of these statements. Mr. Brooke said there would probably be a need for a further round of bilaterals; however, it was unclear whether this would be in advance of the scheduled opening of plenary on Tuesday morning or subsequently.

#### Substantive Issues

6. Following the SDLP account of their meeting with Mr. Brooke, the conversation turned to substantive issues at the forthcoming talks. Hume emphasised that, if the SDLP members are to perform effectively from the outset, they

need a clear understanding with Dublin, very early on, as to the structures at which we are jointly aiming. Mallon referred a couple of times to the SDLP "being in the hot seat" over the next few weeks and the need for Dublin to understand this.

7. Mallon spoke at length about the need for the security nettle to be grasped at a very early stage in the negotiations. In his view, a major flaw in the Anglo-Irish Agreement is that it "fudged" security and legal issues - other matters were dealt with first and, in order to wrap up the package, unsatisfactory language on security was conceded. Mallon underlined his determination to ensure there is no recurrence this time round; the basic issues to be addressed, as he defines them, are (a) whether the RUC can ever become acceptable to the nationalist community? (b) what is to be done about the UDR? and (c) how can an equitable system of administration of justice be devised? These, in Mallon's view, are free-standing issues and can largely be dealt with in advance of, or in parallel with, the discussion on new institutions.

*Mallon intends  
finishing drafting  
his work and  
is asked if we  
will let him  
know case  
advanced soon.  
8. preliminary.*

As to new institutions, Hume repeated that the SDLP is thinking in terms of a Commission (which he described as having powers akin to a combination of the EC Commission and the Council of Ministers) and a small indirectly-elected Assembly (with powers similar to those of the European Parliament). It was clear, however, that Hume had not shared his thinking in any detail with Mallon and McGrady and that they are doubtful on at least some aspects - they are far from convinced, for example, that SDLP interests would be best served by an indirectly elected Assembly.

9. Other subjects touched on were Hume's proposal for new regional Development Boards (half the members to be elected by District Councils and half by the new Commission) and McGrady's view that the whole range of powers exercised at local government level needs looking at in the course of the talks.

Comment

10. Our overall impression was of a certain edginess on the part of the SDLP team - they appear somewhat distrustful of each other and unsure of their precise objectives as a team. While appreciative of the assistance received from Dublin to date, they are clearly anxious to work out a basic blueprint with the Government as soon as possible; they argue that this would enable them - without prematurely showing their hand - to give coherence and direction to their input in the internal talks.

AA.

A. Anderson

1 May, 1991

c. c. PST, PSM, Mr. Nally, PSS, Mr. Brosnan

Ref: 09-1

PROPOSED AGENDA FOR TALKS (SDLP)

1. Each Northern Ireland Party makes a declaration as to the nature of the problem to be solved.

SDLP Declaration:-

"The objective of these talks is to accommodate two sets of legitimate rights:

- the right of nationalists to effective political, symbolic and administrative expression of their identity; and

- the right of unionists to effective political, symbolic and administrative expression of their identity, their ethos and their way of life.

So long as the legitimate rights of both unionists and nationalists are not accommodated together in new political structures acceptable to both, the situation in Northern Ireland will continue to give rise to conflict and instability.")

2. Agreed realities which must be mutually accepted and recognised as the starting point for genuine dialogue, leading to reconciliation and agreement.

(SDLP put forward the following realities:

1. There are two political and cultural traditions which give rise to two different identities.
2. Each of those traditions is equally valid and legitimate.
3. These traditions and identities give rise to loyalties and aspirations which transcend the borders of Northern Ireland.)
3. The Conference accepts that these realities are dimensions of three interlocking and interdependent sets of relationships and must be accommodated within such a framework.  
  
(SDLP specifically seeks to have it accepted that no one of these relationships is 'free standing', and that therefore institutions agreed to accommodate one set of relationships cannot be 'free standing' either.)
4. That each Party put forward political requirements arising from the agreed realities.



6. Pause - each side to consider and analyse the respective positions of the other parties with a view to bringing forward proposals to accommodate them.
- 6a. Each Party puts forward proposals as to structures to accommodate relationships within Northern Ireland.
- 6b. Each delegation puts forward proposals for structures within Ireland which will accommodate the structures in 6a.
7. Two governments determine framework of relationships between the two countries.



Agenda for Internal Talks  
British Suggestions as noted by the SDLP

1. Extent of Powers to be transferred.
2. Extent of responsibilities of any new institutions.
3. Means of exercising those responsibilities.
4. Safeguards for all sections of the community.
5. Protection of individual and community rights.
6. Legislative arrangements for such protection.
7. Defining any new institutions.
8. Security issues.
9. Financial issues.
10. Relationship of any new institutions with
  - (a) Secretary of State
  - (b) U. K. Government
  - (c) Existing bodies (such as Boards, Housing Executive etc.)
  - (d) European Communities.

Note: When the SDLP queried the absence of any reference to the Irish Government in the draft agenda, the Secretary of State responded that this was a matter for the second strand of talks.