



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Ministerial Meeting

31st May, 1991

- M. Gwynne
informal: 1985
Agreement: "later"
- T's Tel. No.
- P2 1 Uns stated

Chairmanship

- Like you, I am deeply disappointed that our meeting is taking place in present circumstances. Earlier in the week - with agreement between us on a Chairman and Rules of Procedure - I was very confident that Strand One plenary meetings would finally be under way next week. This latest turn of events is frustrating and dispiriting for all of us.
- As you know, our initial strong preference had been for a person from outside these islands - possibly a European figure of stature. We involved a dozen or so of our Embassies in very extensive research to try to identify a suitable person. We considered a very wide range of names and eliminated many of them as being unsuitable on one ground or another.
- We were very conscious of the strong emphasis you placed on finding a suitable person in Britain or Ireland and tried to take this into account. Focussing on these islands, it seemed to us that Lord Carrington had the status, integrity and capacity to be a very distinguished Chairman. His credentials - at various times Chairman of the Conservative Party, Leader of the House of Lords, Foreign Secretary, Secretary General of Nato - were impeccable. He clearly had the calibre and track record to inspire confidence on both sides of the Irish Sea.
- We were therefore utterly taken aback by the Unionist reaction. Their grounds for rejecting Lord Carrington, insofar as they have publicly explained their position at all, are wholly unconvincing. Indeed, not alone have Unionist spokesmen been downright offensive to Lord

Carrington personally, but also to the Foreign Office and to the NIO.

- The Unionist behaviour must raise fundamental questions about their seriousness of purpose in this whole process. It will undoubtedly have confirmed the suspicions of those who feel the primary Unionist purpose in this whole exercise is to wreck the Anglo-Irish Agreement.
- The Unionist reaction appears to have been so illogical that I wonder if there might have been any merit in trying to get them to reflect overnight rather than giving an immediate response? Obviously, you were best placed to judge on the spot; it strikes me, however, that there might have been some chance of wiser counsels prevailing if they had postponed their reply until the following day.
- This whole unfortunate episode throws into relief again the question of the role of parties in relation to the nomination of Chairman. Both of us have agreed that no party has a veto and yet - to many people - the Unionist behaviour in this instance must seem as near to a veto as makes no difference. For my part, I cannot accept for one minute that the Unionists have come anywhere near giving a rational explanation for their rejection of Lord Carrington.

Pause

- I think we have to find a way of signalling the seriousness with which we view the Unionist behaviour. I feel it would be a mistake to adopt a "business as usual" approach and thereby imply that it is acceptable for the Unionists to behave in this way.

- We need perhaps to reflect at more length about how best to go forward from here. It may be - and personally I am very much inclined to this view - that the most appropriate and sensible thing for us to do at this point is to pause for a short period and see what steps we might then take.
- I would see a short pause as being therapeutic all round. In particular, it might bring home to the Unionists that they cannot lightly indulge in the kind of behaviour we have seen over the last forty-eight hours - rejecting out of hand a candidate agreed by the Prime Ministers of both countries and then engaging in offensive rhetoric about the candidate himself as well as senior government officials. (These were not just off-the-cuff remarks made in response to questions from journalists, but were contained in the Unionist Leaders' formal statement).
- I would hope that, following a pause, a more cooperative and realistic atmosphere would prevail in which we could take the process further.

[If Mr. Brooke suggests the slate of candidates - Barnett, Thomson, Dahrendorf, Mosner - already turned down].

- I know our officials had a very full discussion on these names in the Liaison Group. On our side we spelled out the reasons why we found these individuals - though clearly men of integrity and intelligence - to be unsuitable for this particular job. Our position has not changed and I honestly do not think it would be very productive to go over the ground again at this stage.

[If Mr. Brooke suggests new names].

- Obviously we are prepared to look at any names you suggest. However, I am clearly not in a position to give any immediate response. We will take the name(s) away and come back to you.

Rules of Procedure

- I was pleased that our officials were able to agree Rules of Procedure last Monday and that these proved acceptable to the SDLP and the Alliance.
- I am aware of course of the draft amendments put forward by the Unionists. As you know, some of these were acceptable to us but others caused difficulty. I would anticipate that our officials today, en marge of this meeting, would be able to arrive at acceptable formulae on the outstanding points of difficulty.

[If Mr. Brooke is critical of delay on our part in responding to proposed Unionist amendments].

- I am bound to say that I could not accept any such criticism. As you know, my officials worked over last weekend to produce a synthesis text that would fairly reflect the views of both Governments. The Liaison Group was consequently able to agree a text on Monday.
- The Unionists then had a series of amendments which we considered on their merits and some of which we were ready to take on board. However, there were some proposed amendments that opened up substantive questions about the nature of the second strand. We obviously had to see these proposed changes against the background of consistent Unionist attempts to by-pass or downgrade plenary meetings

in the second strand. They required careful consideration at all levels - a process which was of course interrupted by developments in relation to the Chairman.

- Given that the two Governments and the other parties are all agreed on Rules of Procedure, we would find totally unacceptable any suggestion from Unionist sources that we are responsible for any delay in reaching agreement on this issue.

Immediate and Confidential

See V security ✓
29/5

For Joint Secretary from Gallagher

1. The Minister was immediately informed of your message regarding the Unionist refusal to accept Lord Carrington as Chairman. Given Lord Carrington's background and profile he finds the Unionist attitude deeply disappointing and very difficult to comprehend. He knows the Secretary of State must share this view.
2. The Minister was extremely conscious of the British Government's wish to have a Chairman from within these islands. While he and the Government initially would have preferred a European political figure of stature, they put forward Lord Carrington's name in response to this emphasis on the British side and with a view to reaching early agreement on the chair in order to enable strand one plenaries to get under way.
3. The Minister would now be very concerned if there were any question of parties in Northern Ireland exercising a veto over a nominee agreed on by the two Governments at the highest level.
4. In view of the foregoing Mr. Collins believes that, having consulted the parties and having approached Lord Carrington, the two Governments should maintain Lord Carrington as their agreed choice of Chairman.

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FAX

Immediate and Confidential

For Joint Secretary From Gallagher

1. We discussed the Minister's message which I transmitted to you yesterday evening (and which he approved before leaving for Luxembourg) again at political level here this morning.
2. Following this discussion I am instructed to emphasise to you the position already communicated in the Minister's message - that is that we strongly believe that the two Governments should maintain Lord Carrington as their agreed choice of Chairman. It is clear from this that we would not now wish to proceed with either of the other two names mentioned at the Liaison Group in Dublin on 27 May.

The Secretary of State asked me whether I would be prepared to chair the second stage of the Northern Ireland Conference. I said that I would, provided all the parties concerned were agreeable. I understand that one of the parties has not agreed, which, of course, is their prerogative. Indeed, it would be a great mistake to have a conference of this kind unless the Chairman was acceptable to everybody.

I very much hope that Mr. Brooke will find a Chairman who is acceptable to everybody and that his initiative will succeed, for I believe there is a real chance of progress being made between all those concerned.

Lord Carrington

STATEMENT
FROM
THE TWO JOINT UNIONIST LEADERS

When we met with the Secretary of State yesterday there was a general conversation about possible candidates to chair Strand 2 of the talks. Some names were discussed only one of which was not acceptable to ourselves.

The Secretary of State made it clear that if a name suggested was not acceptable then it would be removed from the table to avoid embarrassment to the individual concerned. Furthermore we were asked to maintain strict confidentiality on the matter, which we did. It was our view and that of the Secretary of State that if a name was rejected then there was nothing to report.

We are dismayed and angry that the confidentiality which we were asked to keep was broken by the NIO.

Lord Carrington was never a serious contender for the part of INDEPENDENT CHAIRMAN.

His record on N.I. is deplorable.

He was Secretary for Defence responsible for the army in N.I. when the notorious cease fire with the IRA was arranged in 1972.

As Foreign Secretary he was part of Mrs. Thatcher's team which visited Charles Haughey in Dublin in 1980 to set up the mechanism under which the Totality of Relationships could be discussed and which eventually led to the AIA.

His remarks about Unionists have been disparaging and offensive.

His record on international settlements is appalling. As Foreign Secretary he arranged the sellout of Rhodesia.

He was Foreign Secretary when the Foreign Office proposed the handing over of the Falklands to Argentina and its leaseback to the UK. This proposal led to the Argentinean invasion of the Falklands and Lord Carrington's forced resignation.

No objective observer would see Lord Carrington as independent or inspiring confidence.

Just today the Secretary of State has revealed to us that Dublin has already turned down a number of names, which had been ~~proposed~~ to them and that he had turned down a number of names which Dublin had proposed to him. Unlike the British and Irish governments, we have rejected only one name.

It is clearly unsatisfactory that negotiations should be conducted in a manner which enables the British and Dublin governments to turn down names privately while Unionists are put in the position where any name turned down by them is revealed publicly. This surely is totally unfair to candidates.

We emphasise that there is no boycott of the talks by either of our parties. Our presence here today confirms that. Indeed we had been told that there would be a meeting of our parties with the Secretary of State, but this has now been cancelled by him.