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FROM: PS/SECRETARY OF STATE
20 SEPTEMBER 1991

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
PS/Paymaster General (L&B) - B
PS/Minister of State (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Ledlie - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr A P Wilson - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr McNeill - B
Mr Cooke - B
Mr Petch - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Archer (FCO, RID) - B
HMA Dublin - B

618/9
235/10

MR D J R HILL - B

23/8
a Mr Haniffa

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH THE UNIONIST LEADERS:
20 SEPTEMBER 1991

The Secretary of State met Mr Molyneaux and Dr Paisley in his room in the House on the morning of Friday, 20th September. Mr Thomas and I were also present.

Security

2. The Secretary of State began by asking whether the Unionist leaders had any advice or recollections of past patterns of "tit for tat" exchanges which might be helpful. Mr Molyneaux responded that in the past the IRA had responded to their own people being killed by concentrating on the security forces, which in turn had led to a scaling down of the Loyalist attacks and the exchanges had fizzled out. This time was different because the Loyalist paramilitaries had used the ceasefire during the talks - which he regarded as being an act of blackmail in order to get themselves invited to the conference table - to regroup and to improve their intelligence operations. The Secretary of State agreed that they had used the ceasefire to enhance their capabilities. In parts of the Province the Loyalist organisation had also become more cellular in nature.

CONFIDENTIAL

JW/12051/SOFS

3. Dr Paisley said that the current leadership of the Loyalist paramilitaries was totally unknown to him. Previously he could have talked to Andy Tyrie, but the current leaders were faceless and recent events indicated that operations were being professionally carried out. Mr Molyneaux concurred, saying that he could no longer "put the lid on it" in Lisburn as he once could. The situation had also been reached where Loyalist terrorists were killing more people than were Republicans.

4. Continuing, Mr Molyneaux said that the security co-operation on the ground with the Republic was almost non-existent. If the security forces asked for covering force from the South, then this could be as small as "a Garda sergeant on a bicycle". The flow of useful intelligence was also almost non-existent. He was not saying that the Irish Government were unwilling, but they simply were unable to mount the required operations. If British security forces noticed activity just over the Border, reports took several days to filter back. Moreover, Republican terrorists were being encouraged by the message being transmitted by the Secretary of State that HMG had no vested interest in Northern Ireland. Common ground seemed to be emerging between the IRA who were seeking to expel British forces and HMG who were giving the message that they would like to get out as soon as they could. The Secretary of State pointed out that the critical qualification was that he had said that there was no selfish interest, in order to make it clear that the reason for the British presence was not in order to protect Britain's back-door.

5. Mr Molyneaux asked whether it was necessary to repeat this message. He recognised the link with self determination, but this would not be an issue for many years. It could be damaging in encouraging people in Northern Ireland to look towards their own security and not support the British Army. It was also the case, as was shown by the history of the Colonies, that those who co-operated with security forces suffered once they had left, and this applied especially to the Catholic population. The Secretary of State stressed that in response to IRA calls for "Brits Out" he had pointed out both the fallacy of their

CONFIDENTIAL

JW/12051/SOFS

definition and made it clear that, for as long as the million or so people were totally committed to being British, that wish would be defended - if necessary at considerable cost in both lives and financially.

6. Dr Paisley said he strongly shared Mr Molyneaux's views. Speaker Foley had said to him that the British had no wish to stay in Northern Ireland. HMG should say to the people of Northern Ireland that they would make the arrangements that they wanted. If a Nationalist majority could be given their right to decide, so could the current Protestant majority. Dr Paisley then handed over a document which he said had been issued to members of the RUC. Such material did not, in his view, enhance the confidence of the security forces. (The Secretary of State indicated some sympathy with this view.) There was considerable concern in the Province about the security situation. There had been a businessman on the radio that morning, and he did not think that appealing to the paramilitaries, such as Dr Mawhinney did by asking them to set out their agenda, was at all helpful. Nor were remarks that not everybody could be protected. The Secretary of State said that he had made that remark in response to a particular question relating to paramilitaries fighting each other. It was an example of the hazard that a remark made in a particular context could become generalised - the "Eamonn Malley" syndrome. Dr Paisley replied that such an approach played into the hands of paramilitaries. At a funeral to which he went the previous day, people were commenting on the fact that the Secretary of State had said that they could not be defended. The Protestant paramilitaries were devoted to the destruction of democracy and democratic Unionism. They were saying that the Secretary of State had appealed to them because they were in control.

7. Mr Molyneaux suggested that there should be a major review of security, and asked whether the Secretary of State would be seeing Mr Maginnis and himself shortly. The Secretary of State said that he would be very happy to do so. He was very conscious that confidence was fragile.

8. Dr Paisley referred to family near Annaghamartin who were known to him. The Roman Catholic community in that area wanted and other Protestant farmers to leave the area. He could not believe that thirty IRA men who had closed off the Border during the recent attempt to bomb Annaghamartin could have done so unbeknown to the Garda.

 family had been ill-treated and threatened. The Secretary of State pointed out that IRA had taken over Catholic houses as well. Dr Paisley said that the family feared the return of the IRA. Mr Molyneaux added that there was fear all along the Border.

 The Secretary of State had repeatedly said that security arrangements with the South were good, but the Garda simply did not have the necessary manpower and equipment. The Secretary of State pointed out that what he had said was that the relations between the RUC and Garda were good. Dr Paisley emphasised that the onus for action lay with the Secretary of State rather than with the Unionist leaders, but there was clearly a need for action to be taken.

Prisons

9. Dr Paisley then raised the situation in Crumlin Road Prison. When visiting the prison recently he had seen some Loyalist prisoners who were scared that they might be attacked by Republicans. He was not in favour of segregation, and was glad that that was ending, but some form of separation needed to be practised for the safety of the inmates. For example, Loyalist and Republican prisoners should not be kept on the same landing. To prevent a tragedy, "wisdom and wit" need to be used in the organisation of the prison. The Secretary of State agreed to look at the situation.

Political Development

10. Mr Molyneaux, in a prepared opening statement, referred to the Secretary of State's references, both in drawing the previous talks to a close and in his subsequent statement to the House, to the need to renegotiate elements of the talks process. He did not think that the talks process should be stopped simply because the media were speculating about an early election. In his view the right place for further talks to take place was in the Westminster Parliament buildings. A look at the whole talks structure was necessary, especially in the light of Mr Collins's remarks as reported in the Belfast Telegraph. The Unionist's position was that the Agreement should be suspended, including the Secretariat. If, however, talks had to be "under the Anglo-Irish Agreement", as Mr Collins had said, they would not take place. The Unionists could not negotiate under the duress of the Agreement. A different structure for the talks which was modest and flexible was needed. Changes in either local government, or at Parliamentary level, to allow the people of Northern Ireland to express their views through their elected representatives should not be ruled out.

11. Dr Paisley said that his confidence had been shattered by the ending of the talks, by the decision about the UDR, and then by Mr Collins's remarks. Several journalists had told him that Mr Collins had insisted that negotiations should take place under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It would not be possible to carry forward talks on this basis; indeed the opposite was the case. The Secretary of State said that this was not something that Mr Collins had said to him, but he would look at the transcript of Mr Collins's remarks after the Conference. Dr Paisley complained that Mr Collins's remarks before Conferences were distinctly unhelpful. The Secretary of State said in confidence that he had told Mr Collins privately that the technique of giving pre-Conference briefings was counter-productive. His patience with Mr Collins on this score had run out. What Mr Collins had said to him in the Conference was that the conditions which had been negotiated previously should continue,

CONFIDENTIAL

JW/12051/SOFS

such as a gap between Conferences. In other words we should not renegotiate everything right from the beginning.

12. Dr Paisley said that the statement by Mr Collins needed to be repudiated publicly. In his view the best way forward would begin with the first strand of talks to try to reach towards an internal settlement. The Secretary of State pointed out that there would be a complication in that it would be difficult to get John Hume to participate without him knowing what would happen subsequently. Dr Paisley said that the right place for the discussions would be in London. He had never been happy that Strand 2 issues had interfered with the Strand 1 discussions, nor with the Stormont location, but the Unionists had gone along with the proposals for the sake of the talks. In future it would not be right to negotiate against such a deadline. The Secretary of State commented that while the Strand 2 issues might arguably have been dealt with before 26 March, if he had tried to settle them beforehand, it was likely that the talks would not have started at all. And it was clear that people in the Province wanted to see progress being made. The ending of the talks was perceived to have been reasonably amicable, and hence to open up the way for new talks. What form did the Unionists see the new talks taking?

13. Mr Molyneaux responded that some bilaterals were necessary in order to gain an idea of what the SDLP and the Irish Government wanted. Dr Paisley added that the basis for the talks should be renegotiated "in this room". He also objected to the Alliance Party being treated as equals. This was not the case: they were not represented in the House. Moreover, they had been used by the SDLP and HMG to "keep us at bay". Dr Alderdice's comments were an affront and he therefore treated the Alliance Party with contempt. Nor did he like being lectured by a Bishop at a recent funeral that Unionist politicians were in some way responsible for the killings because of the political vacuum. The Secretary of State pointed out that the problem with bilaterals was that Mr Hume would not show his hand until he knew how matters would continue afterwards.

14. Mr Molyneaux said that the end product had to be developed in outline. The SDLP needed to be asked what they saw emerging from strand 2. His experience of the lead-up to privatisation of Harland and Wolff led him to conclude that the best way of making progress was for the leaders of the parties to sit down together. Dr Paisley concurred, pointing out that when a critical situation had been reached during the talks, progress had been made when the leaders met together. The Secretary of State asked whether it was necessary for him to be part of these talks between the party leaders. It might be easier for Mr Hume if he were not present. While clearly he would need to be brought in eventually, in terms of preliminary discussions it was not clear why the Unionist leaders should not be able to make progress with Mr Hume alone. Dr Paisley said that there was no point in the leaders making statements to themselves. HMG had to know how matters were developing and how proposals had come about. Mr Molyneaux said that he had no objection to sounding out Mr Hume in an informal way.

15. Dr Paisley repeated that any talks should take place in the House. He stressed that he was prepared to go to Dublin when the talks had been seen to be making progress. Northern Ireland was not being negotiated out of the UK, and therefore London was clearly the right location for the talks. As well as talking to Mr Hume, there was a need for HMG's views on both local government - whether HMG saw it remaining as at present, or whether more responsibility would be given to local representatives - and on the appointment of a Select Committee at Westminster. There was no reason why progress could not be made. At times he had been encouraged by what had happened during the Stormont talks, but at other times very discouraged. The Secretary of State agreed with that observation about the talks. It was a pity that the substantive discussions had occurred later on in the talks. The July 16 date was a function of the original deal that was agreed, and which was necessary to satisfy the Unionist manifesto commitments.

16. Commenting on the UDR, the Secretary of State assured Dr Paisley that the Irish Government had nothing to do with the decision. They were told at the same time as others had been. Dr Paisley referred to a conversation that he had had with Mr King behind the Chair, which suggested that the name of the Regiment had been changed and that there had been some Irish involvement. Mr King had gone so far as to say that the Unionists could "never again have a Regiment bearing the Ulster name and you know why". He did not know why, but the changes to the UDR were doing a great dis-service to them.

17. The Secretary of State then referred to the dinner which Dr Mawhinney was proposing to have with members of the political parties present. He had made it clear to Dr Mawhinney that this should be open and above board, and that the leaders of the various parties should approve of it. The object of the dinner was to discuss views about the previous set of talks. Dr Paisley said forcibly that he did not approve. He did not think that a post-mortem of the talks was appropriate. It was better to look forward. Mr Molyneaux added that he did not wholly approve either. Dr Paisley, apparently relenting, then said that Dr Mawhinney could hold such a dinner if he wanted, but in his view it was not necessary.

18. The meeting, which had lasted seventy minutes, ended at 1.10 pm.

Further Actions Required

19. The follow-up actions required are:

- (a) Material being circulated within RUC (para 6 above). This is being circulated separately. Could Mr Leach

CONFIDENTIAL

please provide a note on this material, and advice as to whether further action is required.

- (b) Meeting with Mr Molyneaux and Mr Maginnis on security. Private Office will follow up; the Secretary of State will first see Mr Maginnis about PANI appointments (para 7 above).
- (c) Prisons (para 9 above). Could Mr Steele provide advice, please.
- (d) Mr Collins remarks about the talks and the AIA (para 10, 11 above). I have written to Dr Paisley and Mr Molyneaux with a copy of the transcript ("for our part, we will continue to be as positive and as flexible as possible, consistent of course with our commitment to the Anglo-Irish Agreement").
- (e) Dr Mawhinney's dinner (para 17). The Secretary of State interpreted the Unionist leaders' response as grudging acceptance of the dinner. This can therefore go ahead, but if signs of resistance are detected on the Unionists' side it may be necessary to reconsider.

Signed.

A J D PAWSON
PS/Secretary of State
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