



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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*SECRET*

*Meeting of High-Level Group of Irish and  
British Officials in London,  
Monday, 11 September*

1. Following is a summary report of this meeting. A list of those present is attached.
2. Opening the meeting, Sir Robin Butler said that the British side were not under any instructions other than to explore with the Irish side whether and how the peace process might be moved forward. Everyone acknowledged that there had been a setback. However, it was not his intention to engage in a post-mortem. We should instead consider how to move forward - and the fact that the British side were not operating under instructions should encourage both sides to be candid. In doing so, we should obviously look for a basis for forward movement that would attract all parties, although as the Taoiseach had said in Dublin Castle on the previous Thursday, the two sovereign Governments must be prepared to act together as Governments when the time is right (in the event that efforts to find an all-party basis were unsuccessful).
3. Continuing, Sir Robin indicated that the British side were ready to look again at aspects which had previously been settled, although obviously they would want to build on Chilcot and Dalton. He added that it was not proposed at this meeting to look at particular forms of words or to negotiate on any document. However, when the time came to prepare for the next Summit, we would need to be very clear (on wordings etc.).
4. Responding, Secretary Teahon indicated that he wished to make two points in the spirit of openness which Sir Robin had invited. First, the Irish side had been upset at the way in which the British side had briefed the media following the postponement of the Summit - particularly the reference to the "rats" having got at it. Second, we felt that (notwithstanding what Sir Robin had said in his opening remarks), it was important that we should be clear as to precisely why the Summit had been postponed. In summary, we had understood that the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister had reached the point where they were agreed that the International Commission would be put in place - without any explicit

reference to Washington three in its terms of reference - and that all - party talks would go ahead even if the Commission's report did not reflect Washington three. However, the next thing we heard was that if the Commission's report did not reflect Washington three, the British would insist that all-party talks could not go ahead unless this condition was met.

5. Mr. Teahon emphasised that we, like the British side, wanted to move the peace process forward. However, if the British continued to insist on Washington three, the peace process would inevitably break down.
6. Sir Robin Butler professed a certain degree of ignorance about the briefing which had been reflected in the media following the postponement of the Summit and suggested that we should not to pay too much heed to these kind of reports. Mr. Chilcot expressed surprise that we had taken "the rats" to refer to Irish Ministers and officials: he himself had thought that this was a reference to Sinn Féin. On being pressed further on our concerns on this point, Sir Robin gave an assurance that there had been no intention that the rats should have been understood as meaning Irish Ministers and officials. The phrase in question was simply the kind of thing which was said to denote that things had come apart. Mr. Lyne added, in support, that the Prime Minister had felt sorrow about the postponement of the Summit but absolutely no anger and that he had greatly appreciated the Taoiseach's frankness. Before leaving the issue, Mr. Teahon underlined the need for sensitivity in public presentation by reference to Sir Patrick Mayhew's Munich analogy at the British Irish Association. Sir Robin indicated that Sir Patrick had not intended to suggest that the Taoiseach was a Chamberlain - like figure but rather that the British Government itself did not want to be cast in this role.
7. Moving on, Sir Robin suggested that by way of scene setting for the postponement of the Summit, it might be useful for both sides to give an assessment of the political situation as they saw it. Mr. Chilcot followed up by emphasising the degree of cross-party consensus in Britain (on decommissioning?). The British - and Irish - Governments were facing a general consensus: it was not a question of just trading at the margins, with Unionist MP's. It was very important that we should understand this as a reality. Meanwhile, in Belfast, the election of Mr. David Trimble as UUP leader had underlined the feelings of insecurity and fear among the Unionists - Mr. Chilcot added that in the short-term Mr.

Trimble would operate under restraint, although there was some hope for the future in that Mr. Trimble did not run the risk of being outflanked on the right wing. Turning to Sinn Féin, Mr. Chilcot said that the British Government and officials believed Messrs. Adams and McGuinness when they said they had a limited capacity to act and that while they might not have right on their side, they were not bluffing. At the same time this was not to say that they were immovable.

8. Following a reference by Mr. Chilcot to the SDLP, Sir Robin mentioned that Sir Patrick Mayhew had held a meeting that morning with an SDLP delegation led by Mr. John Hume. Mr. Thomas said that, at the meeting, Mr. Hume had presented new proposals to the British Government, based on the text which Mr. Hume had previously submitted to them (in July?). The main difference in the new text was that the idea of a two day convention of all parties had been dropped: Mr. Hume had emphasised that the important thing was to have a date for starting talks - format and structure were not important. Mr. Thomas said that Mr. Hume had been asked at the meeting if the sentence in the text about the question of arms being settled "to the satisfaction of both Governments" would allow for Washington three. He had replied that he was conveying this on behalf of Mr. Adams. Mr. Thomas added that Mr. Hume had at a later point in the meeting qualified this somewhat, by saying that it had been conveyed in a conversation with Mr. Adams but not expressly so. Mr. Thomas also reported that Mr. Hume had emphasised that the proposals could only work if the British Government did not ram it down Sinn Féin's throat that they had abandoned their position on Washington three. He said that the British had responded to Mr. Hume's proposal by saying that it might be worth considering but that there would need to be a clear understanding. The two sides had agreed to meet again. In the meantime, the British side intended to write to Mr. Hume with their understanding of what he had said.
  
9. Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that, notwithstanding the above, we had no reason to believe that Sinn Féin could meet Washington three in any form. We did not underestimate the difficulties for the British Government in moving away from their position on this. The problem was that if there was a permanent stand-off on the issue, it was very probable that the ceasefire would unravel. At the end of the day, this was a matter which had to be resolved by the British Government and Sinn Féin. Mr. Ó hÚiginn referred to the political fall-out of a breakdown for the Irish and British Governments: it would be more serious for the former than the latter. He

added that even if there was a "gesture", it would not be enough to satisfy Unionists, who were seeking the disbandment of the IRA. Mr. Ó hÚiginn also referred to the IRA's manufacturing capacity and made the point that calls for a gesture in a way conferred a legitimacy on the holding of arms.

10. Continuing, Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that there were two constants in our position on the International Commission. The first was that, if the ceasefire broke down on Washington three, it would destroy the Irish Government. Second, we had never seen any value in going ahead with a Commission in the absence of co-operation from Sinn Féin/IRA. We had made our decision on the postponement of the Summit in the light of these factors. Mr. Ó hÚiginn added that while he had previously been inclined to take a sanguine view about the maintenance of the ceasefire, he was tending to the conclusion that the British Administration did not have in it the capacity to take the kind of risks (for continued peace) which we felt were justified. If he was right, perhaps the real question for us all was not decommissioning but how to manage the stalemate or worse, a breakdown.
11. Responding, Mr. Chilcot said that while he could not see the way through at this point, he was nevertheless more optimistic (than Mr. Ó hÚiginn) that a way forward would be found. Taking up the point that at the end of the day, the decommissioning issue would have to be resolved by the British Government and Sinn Féin, he expressed the view that to the contrary, everyone (including the Irish Government) had a role to play in this.
12. Continuing, Mr. Chilcot said that he did not believe that Sinn Féin/IRA could not decommission: they could, if the circumstances were right. Mr. Adams had accepted the need for decommissioning. Others, including the British Government, could contribute to bringing about the right circumstances. Mr. Chilcot also emphasised that the British Government had never talked in terms of a gesture but rather in terms of the start of a process. He added that the decommissioning issue needed to be addressed in tandem with talks: we needed to get the decommissioning and talks process going at the same time.
13. Mr. Chilcot noted that the decommissioning issue had been given added point by Mr. Trimble's identification of it as a key issue. There was logic in his argument that the participation of a party in talks backed by a

private army went against the spirit of the Joint Declaration. Mr. Chilcot also noted Mr. Trimble's reference to possible other ways of dealing with the issue (other than the physical start). He concluded by saying that the British Government still saw potential life in the twin-track approach.

14. Mr. Ó hÚiginn clarified that in saying that the decommissioning issue had to be resolved by the British Government and Sinn Fein, he was referring to the tactical approach to the issue. The Irish side were at one with the British on the need for decommissioning. We did not believe, however, that the decommissioning process could be begun in a political vacuum, by way of a gesture ( to use shorthand).
15. Mr. Dalton referred to the various messages which had been received about the danger of a breakdown in the ceasefire. In one sense, this was to be expected (as a way of bringing pressure to bear). However, we could not take the risk that it was a bluff. It would not necessarily require a formal decision by the IRA for a resumption of violence to occur. It would more likely happen on foot of desertions to RSF.
16. Mr. Dalton said that he was hopeful that a decommissioning process could be put in place. However, it would depend crucially curcially on the question of timing. While there might be decommissioning in the course of a talks process, we did not believe that decommissioning could be started before the commencement of talks.
17. Mr. Teahon said that the nett point was that Washington three had to be off the table: otherwise, we would have a breakdown.
18. Sir Robin Butler said that according to our account, the British Government had given us to understand that if the Commission's report contained no reference to Washington three, they would still be prepared to go ahead with talks: they had then changed their position to indicate that they would reject the report if it failed to contain Washington three. In fact the British Government's position was neither of these things, as the Secretary of State had made clear to the Tánaiste in Cambridge. The British Government believed that in addition to agreement on modalities, there had to be some start to building the necessary confidence to get the Unionists to the talks. The Prime Minister had said that the British Government would look at the Commission's work with an open mind. Sir Robin added that Mr. Trimble had suggested that there might be other

ways of making progress (other than the "gesture"). He himself could not say what these might be.

19. Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste could not have done more to try to get Sinn Féin to buy into a "gesture". However, it was a bridge too far for them. Sinn Féin believed that in insisting on Washington three, the British Government were setting a precondition which they knew could not be delivered on. The Irish side had been put in a very embarrassing position in the run up to the Summit. Having tried to sell the benign interpretation of British Government intentions about the Commission to Sinn Féin, they had had the ground taken from under them when Sir Patrick Mayhew had told Mr. Adams that Washington three was still in the picture: we had looked like dupes. Mr. Ó hÚiginn reiterated that we had never entertained the idea of going ahead with the International Commission without Sinn Féin's co-operation.
20. Mr. Dalton said that if the Commission report were confined to modalities, the question would have to be answered as to whether there would be a further barrier to talks in the shape of Washington three. Sir Robin Butler said that the terms of reference as proposed for the Commission were in fact confined to modalities. Mr. Dalton (?) asked if there could be a private or public understanding that following consideration of the Commission's report on modalities, we could then move on to talks. Sir Robin said that this would not be possible. What would be possible would be to say that the British Government would look at the Commission's report on its merits - and Sinn Féin could do likewise. The British Government were not seeking to bind the Commission to Washington three but they themselves had not abandoned it.
21. Mr. Ó hÚiginn commented that the difference between the British Government and Sinn Féin was that the former in effect controlled access to talks.
22. Mr. Lyne recalled the Cannes meeting. The Tánaiste had asked at that meeting if the British Government wanted a physical gesture and the British side had indicated that they did. There was therefore a difference of opinion on this point. At the same time, there was a need, notwithstanding this, to inject forward momentum, given that (1) the British Government had tried and failed to get Sinn Féin to move on

decommissioning and (2) Sinn Féin were pressing for parity of esteem. The British side felt that in the lead up to the postponed Summit, they had come close to their objective of moving matters forward. They had set - conditional or slightly qualified deadlines - and while they were slightly nervous they felt they had got a mechanism that would make for forward movement on the political side and decommissioning. They had not felt that this would solve the decommissioning problem but that it would allow confidence to build up and progressive movement - which could have been built on during the Clinton visit - to take place and that this would get over the hurdle.

23. Mr. Teahon said that , to the contrary, the position at Cannes was that the British side had recognised our position that Sinn Féin could not deliver a gesture and that they had agreed to explore the idea of a Commission against that background. In the lead up to the postponed Summit, we believed that the British side were agreeable to going forward with the Commission and then with talks even if the Commission's report did not contain Washington three. There should be no doubt that this was the Government's view; and this accounted for the Irish side's sense of shock when the British side appeared to change tack. It was our strong judgement that Sinn Féin would not buy into the Commission on the basis as subsequently indicated by the British - it had been difficult enough to bring Sinn Féin as far as we had. We firmly believed that if Washington three were maintained, Messrs. Adams and McGuinness would be gone.
24. Mr. Dalton asked what Mr. Lyne had meant when he had spoken of a process of building confidence. Mr. Lyne said that if Sinn Féin started talking about the how of decommissioning, this would do quite a lot to reduce scepticism on the Unionist side that Sinn Féin/IRA were going to decommission and to allay their fears that they would be forced to take part in talks with an armed Sinn Féin. Both tracks in effect represented major confidence building measures. Mr. Lyne added, however, that if the British Government were to drop Washington three, with nothing on the other side, this would represent a fundamental U-turn which would provoke a hard-line (political?) reaction and which would not be politically feasible.
25. Mr. Teahon asked if the British side were telling us that Washington three would remain in place. Sir Robin replied that they were saying that in their view there was a need for Washington three. Mr. Teahon



said that the British Government should recognise that Sinn Féin did not trust them (to change their minds on Washington three if persuaded by the Commission's report?). Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that this was a very important point: Sinn Féin had the darkest suspicions of the British Government. They seemed to be entirely despondent on this score and felt that the British Government were trying to outmanoeuvre them.

26. Mr. Ó hÚiginn made two additional points. First, that treating entry into talks as some sort of privilege might go down well in Westminster but it would not amount to all that much in the eyes of others, especially if, as was the case in Ireland, the group in question (the IRA) were behaving themselves. Second, Sinn Féin believed that if there was a breakdown on Washington three, Nationalist Ireland would be highly critical. In this, they might not be all that wrong.
27. Mr. Chilcot said that neither side in the decommissioning dispute was autonomous. They were both subject to pressures and incentives. The British side had been disappointed at the postponement of the Summit. They had felt that the Taoiseach and Prime Minister were in agreement that the Commission would provide the means to extent pressure on Sinn Féin, not with a view to causing a split but to make it harder for them to resist pressure on decommissioning.
28. Mr. Teahon objected that there had been no such agreement. What Mr. Chilcot had enunciated would clearly have amounted to a trap for Sinn Féin.
29. Mr. Lyne agreed with Mr. Ó hÚiginn that Sinn Féin did not trust the British Government. The problem was that there were two sets of people who lacked trust i.e. the Unionists, as well as Sinn Féin. The question was how could you get genuine, all-party talks leading to a settlement if you couldn't get the Unionists on board. The logical consequence of Sinn Féin and John Hume's stance was that not just the DUP, but also the UUP would refuse to attend talks.
30. Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that by lining up with the Unionists on decommissioning, the British Government were giving a signal that the big battalions were on the Unionists side: this had a negative psychological impact on Sinn Féin. As a second point, Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that while there could be no question/possibility of forcing Unionists to the table, it was a necessary precondition that the British should say

that Unionists should come to the table. However, because of their preoccupation with Washington three, they were precluded from doing this.

31. Mr. Ó hÚiginn asked if the British side felt that Washington three was the absolute precondition for Sinn Féin's entering into talks or if there was something else. If the answer was Washington three, there would be a breakdown. If not, perhaps the British side would tell us what it was.
32. Sir Robin Butler said that they did not know if there was something else. Mr. Ó hÚiginn reminded the British side that Washington three was their idea (so that they would be in the best position to come up with an alternative). Sir Robin Butler noted that Mr. David Trimble had said that there could be something else.
33. Mr. Dalton asked how would the decommissioning of, say, 10% of the IRA's capacity serve to increase Unionists confidence. Mr. Chilcot said that there had to be a start. This would be important as a test of the will and ability of the Republican leadership. Mr. Chilcot emphasised the importance which the British side attached to this. They were prepared to talk to Sinn Féin but they would not negotiate political futures with people who did not have a democratic electoral mandate. He felt that it was conceivable that sufficient progress could be made on the twin-tracks to the point where there would be sufficient confidence for talks, either through decommissioning or some other way.
34. Mr. Teahon asked how the British side reconciled their position of principle with Sir Patrick Mayhew saying that they would look at the Commission report on its merits. Sir Robin Butler did not see any inconsistency here.
35. Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that there would not be much point in revisiting the earlier British (pre-Summit) strategy: it had had no credibility the first time. The kernel point was that we had to be in a position to say that Washington three was gone. Sir Robin Butler repeated that we had misinterpreted the British position on the Commission and Washington three. Mr. Teahon said that Sinn Féin shared in the interpretation as presented by the Irish side and this was the reality which the British Government had to deal with.

36. Mr. Lever said that we were proposing that the British should no longer profess Washington three and that they should also say that whatever recommendations the Commission came up with, they would convene all-party talks. He asked what possible incentive there could be in this for Sinn Féin to say anything at all to the Commission. He also questioned the suggestion that Sinn Féin's agreement to discuss modalities constituted an enormous compromise for Sinn Féin, (given that they had said that all this could be dealt with in 10 minutes). Mr. Lever suggested that what Sinn Féin were afraid of was that in the course of the Commission's work, they would be asked what assurance/gesture/commitment they might be prepared to enter into. Mr. Teahon said that in saying all this, Mr. Lever seemed to be departing from what had been agreed in the joint communiqué.
37. Mr. Dalton returned to Mr. Lynes earlier point that if Washington three were to be dropped, something else would have to be put in its place. Noting that the British side had said that they did not know what this might be, he asked if they had any ideas. Mr. Chilcot commented that this was a question which had to be worth further effort and in turn asked if we had any ideas.
38. Mr. Ó hÚiginn took up Mr. Lyne's point that Sinn Féin's agreement to discuss modalities did not amount to all that much of a concession. He suggested that Sinn Féin's position that this could be dealt with in 10 minutes was a much a response to the peremptory nature of British demands in this area as anything else. Mr. Thomas commented that the British thought they had already brought the modalities horse through the exploratory dialogue phase.
39. Mr. Teahon said that we had thought we had a very good basis for getting around the decommissioning impasse in the lead up to the postponed Summit. If the British were now saying that this was not on, the onus was on them to suggest an alternative. Mr. Lyne responded that in the British side's view, agreement on modalities was not sufficient to demonstrate a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods. The fact that Sinn Féin were making threats about a breakdown in the peace process did not make for building confidence in this regard. No one was saying that all arms had to be given away. The question was how to skin this cat. Washington three seemed to be the best answer but if Sinn Féin or anyone else had a better way this could be looked at.

40. Mr. Teahon emphasised that the British Government were the only people who were in a position to come up with an alternative.
41. Sir Robin Butler summed up the discussion up to this point by saying that we had identified a roadblock but that we couldn't see how to overcome it. The Irish side was saying the British Government should drop Washington three. For their part, the British side were saying that they could not. Sir Robin also repeated that we had misunderstood the British position on the Commission and Washington three. He went on to ask if there were any other roadblocks which needed to be considered.
42. Mr. Ó hÚiginn raised the question of demilitarisation or as the British preferred to put it, the practical consequences of the ceasefire. This was a very important agenda for Nationalists generally, especially the SDLP - even though Sinn Féin tended to be dismissive. Mr. Chilcot referred to Sir Patrick Mayhew's recent Coleraine speech. Mr. Ó hÚiginn pressed the case of Messrs. Kelly and O'Brien and criticised the way in which Mr. Kelly in particular had been treated. So far as the question of other roadblocks generally was concerned, Mr. Ó hÚiginn indicated that we were so concerned about the decommissioning impasse that we had not focused on this question to any great degree. Sir Robin Butler said that in raising the question, he wanted to avoid a situation where the key problem was resolved in some way or another but where other difficulties cropped up.
43. Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that our key requirement was to be able to go back to Sinn Féin and to say that Washington three was gone. We could only press Sinn Féin on decommissioning if we had a sense that this was the case.
44. Mr. Thomas questioned the suggestion that Washington three was no longer viable in view of Mr. Hume's most recent attempts at brokerage, as reported earlier in the meeting. Sir Robin Butler said that we were laying down a wrecking position. Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that we believed we could possibly sell the Commission if Washington three were off the screen. We did not see much point in going back to Washington three: it was the stumbling block.
45. Mr. Lyne said that the British side had thought it had been accepted that Washington three was unresolved but that forward movement could still be made. Mr. Teahon objected that this had not been the case. He

repeated our belief that the British side had accepted that if the International Commission's report did not contain Washington three, the British Government would still be prepared to go ahead with all-party talks.

46. Sir Robin Butler said that if we believed that the only answer was to drop Washington three, we were in effect saying that the whole thing was finished. Mr. Teahon said that the British side appeared to be refusing to accept our account as to what we believed in the lead-up to the Summit. He added that we were quite happy to explore an alternative to Washington three.
47. Mr. Dalton asked, speculatively, if a very strong statement by Sinn Féin that they were committed to exclusively peaceful and democratic means would help clear the way for all-party talks. Mr. Chilcot said that he did not know. It would depend on whether such a statement were to be believed. The Irish side said that the ceasefire was permanent but at the same time expressed fears about a breakdown. The British Government for their part had made a working assumption that the ceasefire was permanent.
48. Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that it was psychologically counter-productive to in effect set examinations for Sinn Féin. The US administration and the Irish Government had acted in a different way - taking Sinn Féin at their word - and Sinn Féin had responded positively.
49. Mr. Teahon raised again the question of a credible alternative to Washington three. Mr. Chilcot again noted that Mr. Trimble had referred to other ways. He used the opportunity to express great surprise that the Irish side wanted to leave it to the British to come up with a solution. Sir Robin Butler added that he could not believe this attitude: it went against the spirit of Anglo-Irish co-operation in the past.
50. Mr. Ó hÚiginn clarified that we were saying that as we had had no involvement in the genesis of Washington three, we were not in a position to define a solution in terms of whatever British requirements underlay it. However, if the British could accept something very upbeat on Washington one and two that would enable them to forget about the upfront delivery of Washington three, we would do our best to bring whatever pressure we could on Sinn Féin to buy in to it.

51. Mr. Teahon said that the British side seemed to see some possibility of there being a credible alternative to Washington three. We were happy with this and it might be useful if the British side told us what they had in mind. Mr. Teahon also repeated our position on the background to the postponement of the Summit. Mr. Chilcot said that we had been relying on the joint communiqué rather than the work of the Chicot/Dalton group. Mr. Teahon responded that we had assumed that the communiqué had overridden everything else. Mr. Lyne said that the British side had not decided to drop Washington three but rather to leave out paragraph three of the draft communiqué in view of the disagreement on this. Sir Robin asked what had we expected Prime Minister Major to say if he were questioned after the Summit about Washington three.
52. Mr. Teahon again asked if the British wanted to share their thoughts on what might be a credible alternative to Washington three. Sir Robin Butler replied that they were not saying that they had a credible alternative which would give a serious demonstration of Sinn Féin/IRA/Loyalist intentions. However, they would not rule out the possibility that an alternative could be found down the track, as the Commission proceeded with its work.
53. Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that there was a practical problem in that the Commission needed the co-operation of Sinn Féin and that if there was a prospect that Washington three would bounce back, this would not be forthcoming. We would not rule out any good ideas for alternatives to Washington three but they had to be alternatives.
54. Mr. Lyne responded that there was also a problem in that the British could not persuade Unionists to engage in talks if they did a U-turn on Washington three. Mr. Ó hÚiginn said that, in our view, the British Government should act independently of the Unionists. Mr. Lyne responded that the British side felt the same about the Irish Government and Sinn Féin. Mr. Dalton, in support of Mr. Ó hÚiginn's point suggested that the British Government should let Sinn Féin and the Unionists deal with each other, independently of the Government. Mr. Lyne said that this was what the British had been trying to achieve through the twin-track approach. The Irish side, however, seemed to be opposed to this. Mr. Teahon said that the approach as outlined by Mr. Lyne went against the spirit of paragraph 5 of the Joint Declaration.

55. Sir Robin Butler said that the Irish side were suggesting that the British Government should drop Washington three. They could not do this, although he would not rule out some other form of this condition. He repeated the British view that we should go down the track in the hope that the Commission would get us on the road (to talks?). He concluded by suggesting that both sides needed to report back to their Governments.
56. [Material to be inserted]. Mr. Ó hÚiginn repeated that we believed that a Commission which did not have the co-operation of Sinn Féin would not be viable. Mr. Chilcot said that the British believed that the Commission might have value as a means of encouraging/pushing Sinn Féin on decommissioning. Mr. Dalton said that we did not believe that anyone would take on the job of Chairman in such circumstances and that it was not profitable to go down this route. Mr. Lyne said that the Prime Minister believed that if we had gone ahead, the combination of British, Irish and US pressure would have encouraged the co-operation of Sinn Féin. Mr. Dalton returned to the question of an alternative to Washington three.
57. Sir Robin Butler repeated that both sides should now report back. He added that the British side would favour further work being done by the group as constituted for the meeting, although it would not necessarily involve all the same people. Mr. Teahon indicated that we agreed.
58. The meeting concluded with a brief discussion of the line to be taken in response to media enquiries. It was agreed that we should simply say that officials had got together for a discussion - not negotiations - and would meet again. It was also agreed that the officials should not be named - the British proposed simply to say that their side had comprised officials from the N10, Cabinet Office and No. 10.