



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/99/10

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24.2.97

PST: PSS, Messrs. Teahon,  
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Ambassadors London &  
Washington; Joint Secretary;  
Counsellors A-I

18.24  
3.

IMMEDIATE

SECURE FAX

21 MARCH 1997

TO HQ  
FOR SECRETARY O HUIGINN

FROM WASHINGTON  
FROM P HENNESSY

ST PATRICK'S DAY VISITORS

1. The presence in Washington over the past week of many leading figures in the peace process has provided opportunities for a range of meetings with the Administration and Capitol Hill. Some points to emerge from these may be of interest.
  
2. At his meeting with the Ad Hoc, Ancram resisted demands to agree 3 June as the date for Sinn Fein's entry to the talks. He instead insisted that the IRA must be seen to observe certain criteria (training/stalking etc) before they could be admitted. The period would not be protracted, but a precise date could not be given. Referring to the need to keep the Unionists in the talks, he said that we must not repeat the mistake of Sunningdale (a curious point, given that the Faulkner Unionists did participate in the power-sharing administration). He also irritated members with his references to 1994/96 as a "tactical cease-fire". The general impression, contrary to some reports which preceded him, was that he had nothing new to say.

3. Hume, whose previous lack of attention to the group has been occasionally commented on, had an excellent meeting. Coming immediately after Ancram, his retort that he preferred a "tactical cease-fire" to a "tactical war" was appreciated, and widely quoted subsequently. He struck his characteristic note of optimism, and hinted that current private contacts could yet lead to pre-election cease-fire. Senator Kennedy, who met separately with the SDLP leader, and whose private assessment is more cautious than Hume's, did a joint press briefing with the SDLP leader. Hume was generally in good form, encouraged by recognition of his central role in articulating the Northern Nationalist case.
4. The UUP delegation reacted quickly, and negatively, to Kennedy's New York speech. In later comment, they suggested that the speech was essentially a vehicle for the views of his aide Trina Vargo, and that Kennedy had read what was put in his hands. When Trimble unwisely suggested as much at his meeting with Kennedy, the Senator took the opportunity to spell out very clearly that these were indeed his own strongly-held views.
5. At his meeting with Under Secretary Peter Tarnoff (State Department), Trimble's line was that the UUP want to get down to business after 3 June, without the "distraction" of a continuing discussion on decommissioning, or otherwise seeking to accommodate Sinn Fein.
6. Referring to the subsequent Irish Independent report, Steve Kashkett, the Irish desk officer who attended the meeting, thought that this was the basis for Trimble's remark about seeking changes in the "context" of the talks. Beyond suggesting that their recent document was intended to change the atmosphere, and not the framework of the talks, Trimble did not press the point. Tarnoff stressed that the US was strongly committed to seeing the talks proceed under the agreed framework, and wished to see



inclusive talks. I was told by NSC sources that there was similarly little new, or encouraging, at his meeting with Berger.

7. With regard to marches, the UUP delegation suggested a formal mediation role for local prominent persons in individual localities. While superficially attractive, I cautioned Kashett that the underlying purpose may well be to diminish the relevance of the Independent Commission, and to reduce pressure for the granting of decision-making powers.
8. As already reported, Michael Ancram at his meeting was handed a letter (copy attached) signed by Jim Walsh, and the Ad Hoc leadership, urging full implementation of North without delay. We had briefed the group on the latest developments prior to the meeting.
9. Also in DC was the delegation from the Bloody Sunday Relatives. Adrian O'Neill was instrumental in arranging an appearance at the National Press Club, as well as other media contacts. Having initially failed to make the cut for the White House reception (on the grounds that they did not fit in the category of MPs/party leaders, or their guests), the group expressed particular appreciation to the under-signed for our successful intervention to reverse the decision. We were also able to ensure the participation of the Women's Coalition in the Speaker's Lunch (they had previously tried through the British Embassy, without success).