



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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PSM, PSS, S/S Ó hUiginn  
Counsellors A-I, Mr Teahon  
Mr Dalton, Dr Mansergh,  
Ambassadors London  
Washington, Joint Secretary,  
Section, Box

**Confidential**

**Meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State,**

*Ms Nolan*

Dublin, 29 July 1997

*Read, thanks.*

Summary Report

*28-8-97*

(25)  
*Decision*  
(10)

**Delegations**

Irish Side: Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Ray Burke T.D.), Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs (Ms. Liz O'Donnell T.D.), Pádraic MacKernan, Seán Ó hUiginn, Val O'Donnell, David Donoghue, David Cooney, Colm Ó Floinn, Paul Hickey, and James McIntyre.

British Side: Secretary of State (Dr. Mo Mowlam M.P.), Minister for Political Development (Mr. Paul Murphy M.P.), Quentin Thomas, Ambassador Sutherland, Peter Bell, Jonathan Stephens, David Hill, and Ken Lindsay

The meeting, which took place in Iveagh House, began with a short private meeting between the Ministers followed by a 1½ hour plenary and concluded with lunch. Ministers gave a short press briefing between the plenary and the lunch. A copy of the Joint Communiqué agreed at the meeting is attached.

The following is a summary of the main points discussed during the Plenary. Presentation is under subject heading and does not necessarily reflect the chronological order in which the points were made.

**The IRA ceasefire**

The Minister and the Secretary of State expressed mutual appreciation for the efforts of their respective Prime Ministers and all those involved on behalf of both Governments in contributing to the restoration of the IRA ceasefire. The Secretary of State said that the British Government would do all they could to ensure that they kept their word on any commitments to Sinn Féin. In turn, they would be looking at word and deed to establish whether the ceasefire was genuine. She recalled that the Minister had told her of the Taoiseach's straight talking with Gerry Adams in relation to the attempted bank raid in Ballsbridge and asked that he keep her informed in relation to this incident and any developments regarding last week's seizure of hand-guns in Dublin Port. She said that such incidents could not be ignored.

At the Minister's invitation, Val O'Donnell gave an update on the Garda enquiries into the hand-gun seizure. He said that the two persons arrested were involved with a courier company and were not thought to be connected with the arms. Efforts to establish the intended destination of the guns were continuing in cooperation with international assistance.



The Minister undertook to keep the Secretary of State briefed on developments.

The Secretary of State indicated that Sinn Féin could have a positive influence on the situation regarding the Apprentice Boys' march scheduled for Derry on 9 August. The Minister recalled that Gerry Adams had received a very strong message to this effect from the Taoiseach and John Hume at last Friday's meeting and had appeared to have taken it on board. The Minister emphasised that he could not promise anything but he recognised that Sinn Féin had the opportunity to send a very positive signal of their commitment to peace and reconciliation.

The Secretary of State said that it was currently her intention to arrive at a decision on the quality of the IRA ceasefire on Friday 29 August (one day short of six weeks from its announcement), which happens to be the day before she leaves on annual holiday. She said that she intended to consult the Minister before taking this decision. (Notwithstanding her interest in hearing more on the Ballsbridge and Dublin Port incidents, she gave no indication that she was contemplating anything other than a positive decision.)

#### **Schedule of meetings**

Both the Minister and the Secretary of State expressed their determination that the two Governments should stick together in the handling of the peace process, noting the dividends which had flowed from this approach and the need to ensure that this continued.

The Minister informed the Secretary of State that the Taoiseach would be seeking to meet all parties before the resumption of the negotiations. While noting that Trimble did not seem in any hurry to meet the Taoiseach, he expressed the hope that meetings could be arranged with the PUP and UDP, in addition to that already agreed with the Women's Coalition. The Secretary of State indicated that the Prime Minister would be meeting Trimble in London the following day and that she and Paul Murphy were due to meet Sinn Féin on Wednesday of next week.

The Minister and Secretary of State welcomed news of George Mitchell's meeting with Pat Doherty and his telephone conversation with Gerry Adams which had taken place the previous evening.

#### **The UUP's intentions**

The Minister expressed dismay at the remarks made by John Taylor at Monday's meeting of the Plenary in Belfast in which he appeared to express doubt as to the UUP's commitment to remain in the talks. The Secretary of State said that she shared this concern, but noted that there had been a number of "silly comments" recently, including Martin McGuinness's assertion that the IRA would not hand over one bullet.

The Minister and Secretary of State agreed on the need to try and encourage pressure on Trimble to enter inclusive negotiations. The Minister referred to Trimble's intention to consult the wider unionist community in the last week of August and first week in September



and stressed the importance of the UUP leader getting the right message from those he talked to. The Minister also referred to the potential role of the media in this regard. The Secretary of State agreed and said, without further explanation, that "we are looking at the possibility of doing some polling".

The Secretary of State expressed concern that the UUP might quit the talks if Sinn Féin were to enter the negotiations on 9 September. Cooney pointed out that the UUP's own decommissioning proposals of last autumn envisaged that they would sit at the table with Sinn Féin in the opening Plenary, and indeed at the Northern Ireland Forum, without any prior surrender of weapons. At that time, they claimed that their objection to entering dialogue with Sinn Féin before a start had been made to decommissioning was limited to substantive political negotiations about the future of Northern Ireland. Thomas added that this (allowing unionists to sit down with paramilitary representatives without the prior surrender of weapons) was the avowed purpose of the elections (of May last year). He also pointed out that sufficient consensus was not required for Sinn Féin to enter the talks.

The Secretary of State complained of the difficulty in knowing the exact position of the UUP; they were positive one week and unhelpful the next. She expressed concern at suggestions that Trimble might want to hold off any decision on his approach to the talks until the UUP party conference on 25 October. Ó hUiginn remarked that for Trimble to await the verdict of the annual conference would be to ensure a negative outcome.

### **Decommissioning**

The Secretary of State expressed concern that the Prime Minister should have something on decommissioning to offer Trimble at their meeting on Wednesday. Referring to a work programme agreed between the Department of Justice and the NIO, the Minister confirmed that the Irish Government were prepared to undertake all the preparatory work envisaged for the establishment of the Independent Commission envisaged in the clarificatory document tabled jointly by the Governments. He said that what we would not do, and indeed could not do, according to the agreed agenda for the opening plenary, was to formally establish the Commission before the launch of substantive negotiations. The Minister stressed that to set up the Commission before Trimble had agreed to enter substantive talks would not only reward Trimble for his intransigence, but would place him under unbearable pressure to demand some actual decommissioning before he would agree to political talks.

Ó hUiginn speculated as to how the Prime Minister might best play the readiness of the two Governments' to make progress on the establishment of the Commission. He suggested that it would be better to hold off the signature of the international agreement until after the start of Trimble's consultation period, when it might have a greater effect on public opinion. In response to suggestions from the British side that it would be useful to have some activity on the Commission alongside "other events" (meaning an invitation to Sinn Féin to join the negotiations), the Minister indicated a willingness to prepare for the signature to take place in the last week of August.

As regards the Chairmanship of the Commission, the Minister said that we would have no



problem agreeing to the appointment of General de Chastelain, once we were satisfied that the UUP were prepared to agree to the consequential appointment of Senator Mitchell as the Chairman of Strand Two. The Secretary of State said that she was prepared to put this to Trimble at the meeting with the Prime Minister, but felt that he was unlikely to agree without having consulted his party.

The Secretary of State revealed that General de Chastelain had discussed with her the possibility that he might retain his Chairmanship of the Business Committee in order, as she put it "to keep his hand in" as one of the Chairmen. The Minister indicated a willingness to consider such an arrangement. Ó hUiginn, conceding that Irish side were at a disadvantage arising from General de Chastelain ongoing disinclination to share his career plans with us, pointed out that the agreement of the SDLP would be necessary for General de Chastelain to continue as one of the talks Chairmen and suggested that an alternative arrangement might be for the chairmanship of the Business Committee to rotate among the participants.

As regards anything further that we could do to help the UUP on decommissioning, the Minister said that we needed to know Trimble's bottom line. He indicated an expectation that the British side would consult us about the terms of their outstanding written reply to the UUP. In response, the Secretary of State said that it would help the British Government, in terms of their meeting with the UUP, if not perhaps in terms of their written reply, if they had a clearer idea of Sinn Féin's bottom line. She conceded that Trimble's demands were bound to be "off the ballpark", but it would be helpful to know where exactly the ballpark was.

Picking up on the Secretary of State's earlier reference to a recent comment by Martin McGuinness, Ó hUiginn said that the Irish Government had taken a very consistent position with Sinn Féin that decommissioning was an important issue which had to be discussed by all participants, including Sinn Féin, as part of a deal. He stated that McGuinness's comment about "not one bullet" had failed to conform to that position.

#### **"Plan B"**

The Minister stressed that the Irish Government's preference was for Plan A - the current process - but that the viability of the present negotiations depended on David Trimble. He recognised that the parties were comfortable with the current talks structure, including its rules and even (though the Minister expressed wonderment at this) its venue, and wanted as little disruption as possible. He recalled the fear put to him by the UDP that if the rule of sufficient consensus was over-ridden to get into substantive talks, it might be dispensed with again down the line on matters of political substance. The Minister emphasised that the Irish Government did not want to depart from the sufficient consensus rule, but that we could not allow Trimble to use it to forever block the path into substantive negotiations.

The Secretary of State agreed that the current process offered the best way forward. However, while accepting the need for an alternative strategy if Trimble refused to allow the launch of the three-stranded negotiations, she was unsure as to what this might be, repeatedly describing the notion that the two Governments should assume joint responsibility for driving



forward the political process in the face of unionist reluctance as "joint authority".

She stressed the need to keep the unionists in negotiations, arguing that if the Governments ignored the sufficient consensus rule the unionists would walk out and probably take the loyalists with them. She floated the idea that, even if Trimble refused to formally park the decommissioning issue, the negotiations could continue with political issues being dealt with in bilaterals and trilaterals while the plenary would meet every month to look at decommissioning.

Murphy also urged caution, suggesting that the walkout of the DUP and UKUP demonstrated an appetite for media attention, rather than a desire to stop talking. He pointed out that he had met the UKUP last week and was to due to meet the DUP next week, admittedly in Stormont Castle rather than Castle Buildings. He also argued that whatever course was ultimately chosen by the two Governments, they would realistically need the backing of the UUP to go to referendum.

Thomas appeared to take a somewhat different line, seeking to emphasise the Governments' joint commitment to launch political negotiations on 15 September; a commitment which, he claimed, had been widely accepted. He argued that on 9 September the Governments should aim to establish whether it was possible to reach agreement on decommissioning so as to enable the launch of the three strands on 15 September. If this was not possible, then the Governments would have to find some way of getting into political substance on 15 September, either under Plan A or by some other means.

When the Secretary of State questioned whether it would be possible to obtain sufficient consensus to move outside the present structures, Thomas replied that the Governments did not need sufficient consensus to do this; what mattered was whether Trimble would come into whatever alternative process was established. Thomas suggested that there would be every pressure on him to do so.

O hUiginn also argued the need for the Governments to honour their commitment to go into substantive political talks on 15 September. He said that the Irish Government had made clear to Sinn Féin that the only thing the Governments could deliver was themselves, but it was important that we followed through on this. He said that the Governments could not sit back and allow Trimble to block the talks by withholding sufficient consensus. If Trimble could not be won over by 15 September, the Governments would have to indicate their intention, albeit reluctantly, to carry forward the substantive process themselves by putting the issues to the parties.

The Minister confirmed that the Governments needed to show determination in respect of the commitment to begin substantive political negotiations on 15 September. We had to decide whether we could keep the present process, or whether we would need to suspend at least parts of that process. He proposed that officials be asked to prepare a document which could put to the parties as an unmistakable signal of the Governments' seriousness of purpose.

The Secretary of State responded cautiously, warning that if such a document were to leak it



would give the impression that the Governments were looking to go to the people over the heads of the parties - to replace the triple lock with a double lock - and would drive the unionists out of the talks and on to the streets. She speculated that such an outcome would be less likely if the Governments were to go for a fudged version of Plan A.

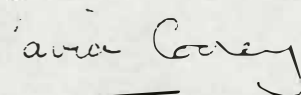
Thomas suggested that it might be possible to produce a document which would be apt for both Plan A or Plan B. The Minister accepted that the situation was a delicate one and suggested that whatever work was being done could be either hidden under the guise of Plan A, or presented as a variant of Plan A. It was subsequently agreed that officials would prepare a paper on these lines. (The Liaison Group is to meet on Friday 8 August to begin this work.)

### **Recent Sectarian Murders**

Both the Minister and the Secretary of State expressed their horror at the recent murders of Bernadette Martin and James Morgan. The Secretary of State revealed that her information was that both murders were sectarian: that of Ms. Martin brought on by drink, while that of Mr. Morgan was drugs related. When asked directly about suggestions that the weapon used to murder Ms. Martin in Aghalee had also been used in the killing of Michael McGoldrick in the same area a year earlier, the Secretary of State indicated that she was not aware that this was the case.

### **Discussion over lunch**

Discussion over lunch was wide-ranging, with little direct discussion of Northern Ireland issues. The British side asked about the Government's intentions regarding the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation and the Taoiseach's proposal for a committee involving the Government and the Northern parties, particularly whether such a committee would be open to the unionists. The Irish side explained that the intention was that the Forum might be available to meet occasionally, perhaps to tidy up points of outstanding business, or to provide a suitable focus for events such as the visit of De Klerk. As regards the committee idea, we said that the Taoiseach envisaged that any such committee would be open to those Northern parties who wished to take part.



David Cooney  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs

30 July 1997