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CC PS/SOS (B&L) M
 PS/Lord Gowrie (B&L) M
 PS/Mr Woodfield (B&L) M
 PS/Mr Bell ✓
 Mr Marshall M
 Mr Blelloch
 Mr Wyatt
 Mr Angel M
 Mr Buxton
 Mr Harrington M
 Mr Chesterton M
 Mr Blatherwick
 Mr Gilliland
 Miss Christopherson M
 Mr Shepherd M
 Mr Doyne Ditmas
 Mr McClenahan

① Mr Bell
 ② POL
 4/11

MEETING WITH THE DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST PARTY, STORMONT CASTLE,
 3 NOVEMBER 1981

Present:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Secretary of State | Mr Peter Robinson MP |
| Lord Gowrie | The Rev W Beattie |
| Mr Bell | Mr D Calvert |
| Mr Wyatt | |
| Mr Shepherd | |
| Mr Boys Smith | |

The meeting was held following a request from Mr Robinson to discuss "constitutional matters" with the Secretary of State. Mr Robinson said that the recent DUP Conference decided that certain subjects should be raised with the Government and they called in response to those resolutions.

2. Security

Mr Robinson referred to the recent PSF Conference and to the risk of increased PIRA violence, about which the RUC had just issued a warning. He believed the PIRA had now thrown down the gauntlet to the Secretary of State and wanted to know what changes would be made to security policy as a result. He knew from his contacts in Stormont Castle that Secretaries of State did not hold representations on this matter in high regard. But people were angry about the way successive Governments, including the last Stormont Government, had allowed things to develop. The Government should now implement resolute military action against terrorists.

3. Mr Beattie, speaking very frankly, said that he could conclude from the present security policy only that the Government was ready to allow

CONFIDENTIAL

members of the security forces to be killed and the PIRA to continue its activities. He wondered whether the Government would now exercise authority over squatting in Twinbrook, following the recent High Court judgment. He believed that the present policy was indicative of the approach taken by successive Governments to Northern Ireland affairs and was the cause of the bloody mess in which the Province now found itself. The credibility of public representatives who sought changes on security was nearly exhausted; they needed a response from the Government.

4. Mr Calvert said that many of the Province's difficulties arose from the fact that over the last 12 years British Governments had failed to listen to the views of the people of Northern Ireland. He and his colleagues were now seeking a change in security policy, without being optimistic about their chances of success. People in Northern Ireland had limited patience and it was time the Government listened to them. He feared frustrations would boil over.

5. The Secretary of State noted the points made and expressed his displeasure at the intemperate way in which Mr Beattie had spoken. He hoped that all community leaders in Northern Ireland would do everything they could to restrain people from acting violently. He was satisfied the security forces were doing all they could and said he had received no request from the Chief Constable or the GOC for more to be done. He had been shocked at the resolution of no confidence in the Chief Constable passed at the DUP Conference, believing that it would undermine the Chief Constable's position. Terrorism could not be completely ended without a political solution to Northern Ireland's problems; noting that Mr Beattie believed this was nonsense, he emphasised the need to isolate terrorists from their support before it would be possible to bring their activities to an end.

6. Mr Robinson and his colleagues made the following further points in discussion:-

(i) they did not believe that political action would have any helpful effect on the level of violence;

(ii) the real reason why the PIRA could not be defeated was that it believed it could win the war and that nobody, given present security policies, could stop it. A range of recent Government

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actions such as the Secretary of State's changes to the prison regime were geared to encouraging the PIRA and the minority community in that belief. Minority politicians were unable to restrain the terrorists;

(iii) the deputation acknowledged that it identified terrorists with the minority community. Ministers were reminded of the fact that the electorate in Fermanagh and South Tyrone had made a similar identification even though in the second by-election there had been an alternative Roman Catholic candidate;

(iv) the Secretary of State's belief that the security forces were doing all they could was typical of the attitude which led to the majority being sold out to the PIRA. It was manifestly untrue that no more could be done;

(v) in Mr Beattie's view, the message from the meeting was that if the Government would not allow the security forces to put down the PIRA then people would have to be ready to fight and to help themselves, to the extent if need be of burning down West Belfast;

(vi) morale among senior police officers with whom Mr Beattie was associated was very low because of the fear they had of assassination. Mr Beattie noted the doubtful value of carrying a gun if it could not be used in self protection;

3
CONFIDENTIAL

7. The Secretary of State noted the further points put to him. He reiterated the need to remove underlying causes if violence was to be ended, and said the Government would not be stopped from seeking political development by the fact that it would take time. Whilst appreciating the pressures imposed on people by continuing violence he believed that the deputation was unfair to the security forces as it was to the efforts of successive Governments. He rejected entirely Mr Beattie's notion that the Government gave encouragement to the PIRA. He wanted political agreement between the two communities so that terrorists on both sides were deprived of the popular support without which they could not effectively operate.

8. Constitutional Matters

Mr Robinson outlined DUP proposals for constitutional development in Northern Ireland. The party advocated the establishment of a convention elected by proportional representation which would have the task of producing a constitution acceptable to such percentage of its members as the Secretary of State would determine. The convention would deliberate until it could obtain the necessary degree of agreement, and would remain in being whilst proposals were put to referendum. If they proved acceptable in the referendum they could then be implemented; if they were not, the convention would have to continue its work to find a scheme which was similarly acceptable to the members and to the people at large. The DUP suggested that the convention should need some 60% or two thirds agreement, but the precise figure would be settled by the Government.

9. In elaborating the scheme the following further points were made:

(i) it was essential that any new political structure should spring from the people of Northern Ireland. The convention was intended to provide the forum where the people could come up with a structure which would survive the disruption of ordinary politics. A further conference of the kind held by Mr Atkins would not work and many would be disinclined to attend it. The Government should be ready to stand back and let the people of Northern Ireland reach a solution. The ballot box provided an opportunity to knock heads together, as the Secretary of State had said he believed was necessary;

(ii) it was fruitless to seek total agreement. But agreement of the order of 60% of a constitutional convention would be possible, perhaps by associating the Alliance Party with the Unionists. The DUP would accept the result of a vote; to deny the opportunity for democratic expression was to give support to the gunmen;

(iii) the convention would not allow one party to dominate, as it had under Stormont. At that time the Unionists were broadly united but they were no longer at one. Even the DUP and OUP together could scarcely count on holding a majority. For this reason the Government could contemplate the democratic process as providing an opportunity for change and development that it had not before;

(iv) in Mr Beattie's view there could be no accommodation of the minority's aspirations for Irish unity in any eventual system of Government. Unionists would fight schemes of that kind, as they had rejected the Council of Ireland;

(v) the majority resented special treatment being given to the minority, although the DUP was ready to help the minority to participate. This willingness lay behind the party's acceptance of ideas giving broad representation of all interests on the committees of an assembly; the present majority might after all one day be in the minority. That was quite different however from allowing the minority to participate in the provincial Government as a right. Power sharing was bound to fail, as the Government must recognise, if any substantial interest refused to co-operate. The DUP would not participate in power sharing.

(vi) the DUP appreciated the Secretary of State's difficulty in publicly accepting a scheme they had put forward, and would not be offended if he promulgated it as his own.

10. The Secretary of State noted the proposal put to him by Mr Robinson and his colleagues. He would give it serious consideration and was interested in the idea of a blocking device in the constitutional

5.
CONFIDENTIAL

E.R.

convention. He too was keen to encourage democratic expression. Thought would have to be given to how the blocking device might be incorporated in any eventual system of Government, accepting that under the DUP scheme this was a matter for the convention to determine. He was anxious to establish a system of Government broadly acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland. He could not comment at this stage on what percentage of the convention might have to agree before any scheme could be put to referendum and would not be drawn on his reaction to the proposal as a whole. Both sides of the community would have to realise they could not have all they wanted and would have to be ready to work within a system which they could live with even if they did not wholly accept. He understood the difficulties of power sharing as a means of providing for the long term Government of the Province.

11. Anglo-Irish Talks

Mr Robinson referred to recent reports in the press that amongst the subjects to be discussed at the forthcoming Summit were an Anglo-Irish Council and an All-Ireland court. The Sunningdale Agreement was brought down by a divided Unionist community; if these proposals were pursued they would galvanise Unionists into concerted opposition and would be found wholly unacceptable. The Government must be clear that it could not follow ideas of this kind. Nor should it seek to institutionalise economic relations with the Republic of Ireland, although the DUP welcomed trade with that country as with other countries.

12. Commenting on Mr Robinson's last point, the Secretary of State noted that it was the policy of the Government to pursue closer economic links with the EC, of which the Republic was a member, and that it would continue to do so.



S W BOYS SMITH
Private Secretary

4 November 1981