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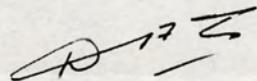
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Duisburg Meeting of NI Politicians

1. John Hume telephoned me yesterday to say that he had been handed a text by John Alderdice, the leader of the Alliance Party, of what he (Alderdice) claimed was the agreement reached between the four Northern Ireland politicians (Jack Allen of the OUP, Peter Robinson, Austin Currie and Gordon Mawhinney of the Alliance Party) who had met recently at Duisburg in Germany.
2. The text handed over by Alderdice is attached. It repeats the two requirements for talks which had already been conveyed to Liam Canniffe of this Department by Gordon Mawhinney. These are that (a) at the end of one Conference, the date of the next meeting would be fixed "sufficiently far in advance to facilitate discussions involving the major constitutional parties in Northern Ireland". The idea is that this would then enable Unionists to enter into talks during this specific period in the knowledge that they would not be interrupted by any meetings of the Conference, and (b) on the day that Tom King would formally invite the Northern Ireland parties to talks, the two Joint Secretaries would be absent from Maryfield. If it was found necessary for the Joint Secretaries to return to their posts during the duration of the talks, this should be handled in such a way as not to cause any embarrassment to the Unionists, given the danger that this might lead to a breakdown of the talks.
3. The text also states that private talks could take place between the parties and the Governments (note the plural use) during the period of the review.
4. The above, as stated in my reports of 27 October and 3 November of the Duisburg meeting, is significantly different from the account given to us by Austin Currie.

5. Subsequent to receiving the enclosed text from Alderdice, Hume had a private conversation with Harold MCusker who told him that (i) the text was completely inaccurate and (ii) as far as he and Peter Robinson were concerned, and this was their understanding of the discussions at Duisburg, the workings of the Agreement would have to be suspended before talks could get underway.

6. In all the (confused) circumstances, and leaving aside the merits or otherwise of the substance of any of the "proposals" discussed at Duisburg, it is difficult to envisage the initiative leading anywhere.



Dermot Gallagher
10 November 1988

cc: PSM, Mr. Nally, PSS, Mr. Mathews/Mr. Brosnan,
3 Counsellors A-I, Box.

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The two Governments would make a statement that the next meeting of the Conference was to be fixed for a future date (to be stated in the announcement) sufficiently far in advance to facilitate discussion involving the major constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland.

Having made that statement, Tom King would invite the political leaders in Northern Ireland into his office to ask them to enter into discussions and he would be in a position to confirm to the Unionist Leaders that on that day that the two Senior Civil Servants were not at their post. It was further agreed that in the event of them having to return to their post at any time during the period of the discussions, their return would be handled in a sensitive way so as not to cause any embarrassment to the politicians involved in talks and not to bring about a break-down of those talks. The only way to deal with this sensitivity was to say nothing about the fact of their reappearance.

It was agreed that each of the four representatives would go back to their parties and canvass that proposition with their parties and in the event that it was successful arrangements would be made to implement the agreement and to move talks forward.

Austin Currie agreed that if the proposition found favour in his Party he would also suggest that the proposition

be put to the Dublin Government by the SCLP because it was accepted by all that the Dublin Government would not move without the agreement of the SCLP.

It was agreed that private talks could be taking place between the parties and the Governments during the period of the Review so that the groundwork was complete by the time the Review was ended.

It was agreed that insofar as it was possible the parties would not say or do anything which would make the situation more difficult for the other parties involved in the intervening period although it was accepted that this was not entirely possible in view of the fact that only a small number of people would be aware of the terms of the Agreement.