



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2018/68/61
Creation Dates:	9 December 1988
Extent and medium:	2 pages
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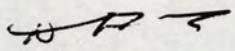
SECRET

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M. Kavan
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Duisburg Initiative

1. Attached is a copy of the paper handed over recently to John Hume by Peter Robinson and Jack Allen (Chairman of the OUP), in which they set down their understanding of the "consensus" reached at the meeting in Duisburg of politicians from the SDLP, OUP, DUP and Alliance. (The first paragraph on page 2 of my report of 29th November, on a discussion with Harold McCusker, gives the specific background to the drafting of this paper).
2. The paper clearly fails to present a realistic option. In the first place, the proposal (para. 4) to leave "only a skeleton presence" in Maryfield would emasculate the Secretariat and would make it very difficult subsequently to recover its substance and "mystique". It would be necessary to have a very clear idea of where talks were leading before agreeing to go down this road.
3. Secondly, the paper's proposal (para. 6), that at the appropriate time the two Unionist leaders would issue a statement saying that "their manifesto pre-requisite for entering discussions had been fully met in regard to both the Anglo-Irish Conference and the Maryfield Secretariat", would be understood to mean that the Conference had in effect been suspended. This would place both the Government and the SDLP in an extremely difficult position, particularly given the absence of any indication in the paper that there were parallel demands of, or commitments by, the Unionist side.


Dermot Gallagher,
9 December, 1988.

cc: PSM
Mr. Nally
PSS
Ambassador London
Joint Secretary

Note

Handed to John Howe by Peter
Robinson and Paul Allen (Chairman of
the OUP) in the absence of Leonard
on 29-xi-88. DID T.

POSSIBLE SCENARIO

1. 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 main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland.
2. In their response to this statement the unionist leaders would announce they intend to seek clarification as to the meaning of the statement.
3. The Secretary of State would invite all the party leaders of the main constitutional parties to meet him separately.
4. The Secretary of State, at his meeting, with the unionist leaders, would explain, in confidence, that only a skeleton presence would remain at Maryfield. This would involve only those essential to re-direct mail and telephone calls to the two governments' respective offices. The other members of the Maryfield Secretariat staff would return to other duties in their appropriate government offices.
5. On leaving the meeting with the Secretary of State the unionist leaders would respect the confidentiality of the meeting with Mr King, they would circumvent any other questions by stating it would be inappropriate to comment as they must first consult colleagues.
6. After meeting colleagues the two unionist leaders would release a statement saying that they had sought and received clarification from the Secretary of State concerning the prospects for talks among the parties in Northern Ireland. The statement would indicate that they now believe unionists could enter negotiations with the other constitutional parties as their manifesto pre-requisite for entering discussions had been fully met in regard to both the Anglo-Irish Conference and the Maryfield Secretariat. No interviews would be given to the press or media. All would be referred to the statement.
7. The other party leaders, would, on ending their meetings with the Secretary of State, also keep the detail of the meeting confidential. They would indicate that they were willing to enter talks.
8. In the event of the two government's representatives having to meet at any time during the period of the discussions, it would be handled in a sensitive way and under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Council so as not to cause any embarrassment to the politicians involved in talks and not to bring about a break-down of those talks.
9. The most sure way to deflect the press from analysing whether the SDLP or Unionists had given ground to achieve talks is for the discussions to start immediately thereby providing a new focus of interest. The press if they were to attempt to push the parties into a position where they were defending their presence at talks would cause agitation amongst party supporters which would not be helpful for constructive dialogue.