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PC122/7
21/5-TP129/7

CONFIDENTIAL

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① Mr P
② Mr S

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cc PS/SofS (L&B) - M
PS/Ministers (L&B) - M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
PS/Sir Ewart Bell - M
Mr Brennan
Mr Angel
Mr Carvill - M
Mr Doyne Ditmas - M
Mr Merifield - M
Mr Abbott
Mr Lyon
Mr Reeve - M
Mr Templeton - M
Mr Bickham



NOTE OF A MEETING WITH DR PAISLEY ON 10 JULY 1984

Present: Secretary of State, Dr Paisley, Mr Merifield, Mr Reeve,
Mr Sandiford

1. Dr Paisley began by expressing his strong opposition to tri-partite talks. He said that the DUP would be very ready to participate in talks with the other parties in Northern Ireland, in an attempt to devise workable arrangements within Northern Ireland. And the Northern Ireland parties would obviously have to meet with the UK Government. But Dr Paisley had been concerned by a passage in the Secretary of State's speech in the debate on the report of the New Ireland Forum, when the Secretary of State had said that the Government would wish to have talks with all the parties in Northern Ireland and with the Irish Government. The DUP view was that the Irish Government had no locus to participate in devising arrangements for Northern Ireland. Dr Paisley said that he had been assured by the Prime Minister of the UK that the solution of the problems of Northern Ireland would have to be found within Northern Ireland, and he added that he had written to the PM that day to ask for confirmation of that assurance.

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2. Dr Paisley said that he wished to talk to the SDLP, in order to persuade them to join in the work of the Assembly, which included the work of the Report Committee in devising proposals for the future Government of Northern Ireland. He was very ready to hear the views of the SDLP, or any other party, on how a solution might be found within Northern Ireland. But he was adamant that the Forum Report itself could not be discussed by the DUP. All three options in the Forum Report involved some transfer of sovereignty, and that was not negotiable.

3. The Secretary of State confirmed that a solution had to be found within Northern Ireland, and that there could be no change in the constitution of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority. He added that, as he had explained in the Forum Debate, the UK Government would be having discussions with the Government of the Republic, at the same time as any discussions took place among the parties in Northern Ireland, but all discussions would be with a view to finding a solution within Northern Ireland. One reason for discussion with the Irish Government was to explore how ready they might be to convey to the SDLP that a solution had to be found within Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State added that the concessions which the SDLP could be expected to need would include some form of Irish dimension (short of change in sovereignty) and some arrangements (even if they did not amount to powersharing) to give the representatives of the minority community some voice in the government of Northern Ireland.

4. Dr Paisley said that, while he might not welcome discussions between the two sovereign Governments, he could not object to them if they did not involve proposals for constitutional change. He thought, however, that any progress from talks among the political parties in Northern Ireland could only come if both London and Dublin refrained from applying pressure. Dr Paisley read from a statement on the DUP view of the proper scope for any talks. This statement expressed vigorous

opposition to any interference by the Irish Government, or 'tri-partite treachery'. It also denounced the Forum Report. It then went on, however, to plead the need for all the parties to address themselves to the many common areas of concern.

6. The Secretary of State sought to persuade Dr Paisley that his statement was unnecessarily rhetorical, to a degree which would deter the SDLP from taking part in talks. Dr Paisley expressed the belief that the SDLP would not be deterred, and said that he saw no reason to alter the statement.

7. The Secretary of State suggested to Dr Paisley that, in any talks with Mr Hume, he should seek to explore what the SDLP's minimum requirements were, both as regards a greater voice in the administration of Northern Ireland and as regards opportunities for the minority to express its Irish identity. Dr Paisley expressed his readiness to do so, but added that in his view Mr Hume wished to obtain political advance pointing in the direction of a united Ireland, to which of course Dr Paisley was opposed. Dr Paisley also thought that Mr Hume would be in difficulty from the danger of being out-flanked by Sinn Fein. Finally, Dr Paisley thought that Mr Hume was too dependent on the belief that the Governments of the UK and the Republic of Ireland could between them devise and impose a solution pointing towards a united Ireland. In Dr Paisley's view, progress was unlikely until such time as Mr Hume realised that that was not so, and indeed until he realised - as the DUP had already done - that forms of Government on the old Stormont model were no longer possible. On the other hand, Dr Paisley thought that a form of administration involving committees, building on the present arrangements, would be possible and could give significant scope for representatives of the minority to exert influence and authority. He would also see it as quite reasonable that chairmen of such committees should discuss matters of mutual interest with their opposite numbers in the Government of the Republic.

7. Dr Paisley said that he would be having informal discussions with Mr Hume in Strasbourg on 25 July. Dr Paisley recognised the tensions within the SDLP, and said that the DUP also intended to discuss matters with a cross-section of SDLP leaders, 'even their greenest of green'.

8. Dr Paisley also expressed readiness to have discussions with Mr Molyneux. But he thought that the Official Unionists were in some disarray, both generally and in the wake of their indifferent performance in the European Elections, and he was not sure how actively Mr Molyneux or his colleagues would wish to have discussions with the DUP.

9. Dr Paisley said that he would also be having discussions with the Alliance party, which like all other parties including the DUP had now made a submission to the Report Committee. Dr Paisley said that, not being a member of the Report Committee himself, he had thought it right to allow that Committee to keep a low profile, and he was not familiar with the detail of their work. He was aware - but asked that the information should not be attributed to him - that the various parties had sent to Mr Hume copies of their submissions to the Report Committee.

10. Dr Paisley acknowledged that, to secure any agreement, it would be necessary to treat the representatives of the minority community generously. He would be ready for minority representatives to have a share of Chairmanships of Committees. He referred to the report of the Constitutional Convention, and to the White Paper which had followed as a useful quarry for proposals which could work. He also commented that, in reality, much of the work on Northern Ireland legislation was already done by the Committees of the Assembly through their close study of and comments on draft legislation. Although Dr Paisley did not favour proposals which would make of the Assembly an upper tier of local Government, he thought that it would be useful to look at the Macrory report

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again to see how its proposals might be adapted to suit present and possible future arrangements for the Assembly. The Secretary of State commented that he might himself wish to have some discussion with Professor McCrory. Dr Paisley and the Secretary of State agreed that the current arrangements, involving Westminster Ministers, the Assembly and a combination of boards and local authorities was very different from the landscape which McCrory had considered, but Dr Paisley still thought that some useful adaptation of McCrory's proposals might be undertaken. For the Assembly, Dr Paisley did not exclude some form of blocking mechanism or weighted voting machinery, by way of safeguards, in addition to possible SDLP Chairmanships. What would not work would be collective responsibility in an executive. Dr Paisley thought that ways could be found to agree on legislative functions for the Assembly, which could perhaps be combined with an SoFS power of veto over legislation, including entire Bills. His view was that such a power, precisely because it was so sweeping, would have to be used (if at all) with great circumspection. The political representatives of Northern Ireland would necessarily have to act more responsibly if more responsibility were given to them. One might also contemplate a small nominated council to act as a filter or buffer between the Assembly and the SoFS.

11. In conclusion, the Secretary of State thanked Dr Paisley for his frank exposition of his views. He encouraged Dr Paisley to use his current strong position to promote informal discussions towards progress. The Secretary of State said that he would probably try to have further discussions himself with the political leaders of Northern Ireland in the second half of August.



G K SANDIFORD

11 July 1984

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