

E. R.

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PAB/1591/BN

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - m
PS/Ministers (L&B) - m
PS/PUS (L&B) - m
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Stephens
Mr Brennan - m
Mr Chesterton - m
Mr Innes
Mr Elliott
Mr Spence
Mr Gilliland
Mr Bell - m
Miss Elliott - m
Mr Blackwell
Mr S Hewitt
Mr G Hewitt
Mr Ehrman - m

RSS 24413

MEETING WITH DUP ASSEMBLYMAN - 21.3.86

I had a meeting with a DUP Assemblyman on 21 March and during our discussion the following points of interest were discussed.

2. He told me he is being encouraged to believe, by his leadership, that Mrs Thatcher will change her mind over the Anglo-Irish Agreement and will meet the unionist demand to suspend meetings of the Conference while talks are under way.
3. The party has also taken comfort from the statement by David Owen that he would not have signed the Agreement. He believes that talks will now start with the SDP/Liberal Alliance and the Labour Party in anticipation of a possible coalition government following the next general election.
4. He talked about the Ulster Clubs and told me their plans are being laid with a view to creating chaos during the marching season and because of this he did not believe further one day 'Days of Action' will be necessary. A long term strike has not been ruled out and he believes it would be successful because the power workers are in Peter Robinson's pocket through the 1986 Committee.

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5. DUP are content with the action taken so far, including those by the bully boys in their midst, though he himself believes that the more violent scenes are to be deplored. He thinks that the actions, which are aimed at isolating Ministers and the Secretary of State in particular, are effective and will in time tell on the morale of those affected. He quoted Merlyn Rees' book in which he apparently said he could stand everything except the solitude in Stormont Castle.

6. I rubbished this notion and took the opportunity of impressing on him that talking is essential and while he and some of his colleagues were prepared in his words 'to sacrifice all' they could not and should not make decisions for others.

7. He told me that the leadership of his party would never be able to sell talks to the grass roots of the party without the pre-condition of the suspension of the Intergovernmental Conference and accordingly he believed that there will not be any talks while Mrs Thatcher maintains her present position.

Comment

8. During the discussion when he was speaking of Dr Paisley he spoke with affection however, this was not the same sentiment when he spoke of Mr Robinson. He told me that while he had known Robinson for some 12 years he had not spoken to him for more than 10 minutes at a time and that Robinson did not encourage personal contact or friendship. He described him as being cold and calculating.

9. This Assemblyman, is a fairly prominent backbencher, but is certainly not in the leadership of the party. He professes to be heavily involved with the Ulster Clubs in his own area and also that he is representing the views of protestants in his district.

10. I have known him for a long time and he has invited me to talk to him again in the near future.


J E McCONNELL
Political Affairs Division

25 March 1986

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