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FROM: CLARE SALTERS
International & Planning Division
10 September 1997

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- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
- PS/Mr Murphy (DFP, B&L)
- PS/Mr Ingram (DED, B&L)
- PS/Mr Worthington (DENI, DHSS&L)
- PS/Lord Dubs (DANI, DOE&L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- PS/Sir David Fell
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Steele
- Mr Leach
- Mr Bell
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Wood (B&L)
- Mr Beeton
- Mr Brooker
- Mr Hill
- Mr Lavery
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Perry
- Mr Priestly
- Ms Bharucha
- Ms Mapstone
- Mr Whysall
- Mr Sanderson, Cab Off (via IPL)
- Mr Dickinson, TAU
- Mr Fergusson, RID FCO (via IPL)
- HMA Dublin (via IPL)
- Miss C Byrne, TPU, HO (via IPL)
- Mr N Warner
- Ms Healy
- Messrs Cary, Reid & Poston (via IPL)
- Mrs McNally

1. ~~at the time~~ ^{and} ~~to~~ ^{10/9} ~~Mr~~ ^{Mr} ~~Smith~~

2. ~~Mr~~ ^{Mr} ~~Brown~~

by

6-9

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS: 9 SEPTEMBER 1997

Pre-brief

1. The morning began with a pre-brief at 09.35 the focus of which was generally on the choreography for the day and the need to come up with a formula to deal with the chairmanship issue to the

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satisfaction of the Independent Chairmen and the UUP. **The Minister** expressed that this must be resolved today.

Meeting with the Irish

2. At 10.10 we were joined by the Irish Government. After initially extending his condolences for the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, **Mr Burke** had a brief discussion with the Minister about their preferred choreography for the Plenary later that day. **Mr Burke** then asked for an update on the UUP position. **Mr Murphy** explained that the Prime Minister was due to meet Mr Trimble the following day and that he himself hoped to be able to speak to Trimble later in the day regarding the decommissioning issue. Both agreed that it was important that a straight choice be put to Trimble regarding the chairmanships issue.

3. In terms of squaring the Chairmen, **Mr Burke** suggested the two Ministers might usefully have a private word with the Chairmen following the meeting scheduled for 11.00 that morning. However, more than this was unlikely to be possible in advance of knowing the outcome of the UUP's consultation exercise. **The Minister** said that we would clearly know more on Thursday and could then make more realistic plans.

4. It was agreed that the two Ministers would meet on Thursday morning, possibly speak again at the BIA in Cambridge on Saturday morning and on the 'phone on Sunday; and would meet again at 09.00 on Monday (25) September.

Meeting with the Chairmen

5. The meeting between the Chairmen and the two Governments which began at 11.05 covered much the same ground. The choreography for

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Plenary was agreed and there was a general discussion about the perceived mood within the UUP regarding their participation.

6. Following this meeting the **Minister** and **Mr Burke** had a private discussion with the Independent Chairmen.

Plenary

7. After about 10 minutes of vigorous handshaking Plenary commenced at 12.00 noon. **Senator Mitchell** introduced the main business of the day which was for Sinn Fein to affirm their total and absolute commitment to the Mitchell Principles. **Senator Mitchell** read the 6 principles and then called on Gerry Adams on behalf of Sinn Fein to affirm their commitment to them. **Gerry Adams** stated that he was pleased and welcomed the opportunity to affirm on behalf of Sinn Fein their commitment to these principles. **The Senator** then invited all the delegations to make statements.

8. On behalf of the Secretary of State and himself, **Mr Murphy** welcomed Sinn Fein on the occasion of their entry to the Talks. He explained that their participation had been made possible by the restoration of the IRA ceasefire on 20 July and that the Secretary of State, after due consideration of all relevant evidence, had accepted that it marked an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994. The restoration of the ceasefire had enabled Sinn Fein to take its seat alongside the other parties that had received a mandate in the May 1996 elections. Like them it had now affirmed its commitment to the Mitchell Principles. Sinn Fein's commitment to the Mitchell Principles ensured that all participants in the Talks were on an equal footing in a forum where force of argument had replaced the threat of force. He hoped that it was now possible to look forward to the real possibility of a fully inclusive Talks process involving the representatives of the whole

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of thought and opinion in Northern Ireland. He emphasised that the British Government was firmly committed to see the Talks moving into substantive negotiations towards a comprehensive and widely acceptable settlement and he urged all participants to use this process to achieve a new beginning for Northern Ireland in which people could be confident that their views were represented and their identities respected.

9. On behalf of the Irish Government **Mr Burke** welcomed Sinn Fein, adding that he believed this opportunity for genuinely inclusive negotiations in a context for peace was unprecedented and, indeed, that it had the potential to be as significant as the Talks that led up to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. He emphasised that the Irish Government wanted fully inclusive Talks and wanted all the parties to engage fully, and hoped particularly that the Unionists would engage. He welcomed Sinn Fein's affirmation of their commitment to the Mitchell Principles stating that this was very significant and noting the exacting nature of the principles. He also complimented all the other delegations for their dedication and perseverance through the initial part of the Talks which had at times become very tedious and bogged down in detail. There was now an opportunity to leave all this behind and the two Governments were determined not to let this opportunity pass.

10. **Lord Alderdice** welcomed the Chairmen and said how much his party valued their ongoing commitment to the process. He also welcomed Sinn Fein and the opportunity to work again with them. He expressed his disappointment that the Unionists were not there but hoped that they would decide to stick with the process and he emphasised the importance of moving on to substantive negotiations as soon as possible. He added that, as the purpose of the Plenary was to resolve the issue of decommissioning, it might be useful to bring Sinn Fein up to date with the progress that has been made. He

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indicated that the Alliance would be passing to Sinn Fein copies of their proposals and he hoped that other delegations would do so too. He also commented that as a means of achieving greater openness in the process it might be worth adopting the proposal which had been made, although not accepted, in the 91/92 Talks, ie that Plenary sessions should be available for TV recording unless participants decided otherwise in particular cases. He recognised that this was more properly a matter for the Business Committee and hoped it could be referred to that.

11. **Malachai Curran** welcomed the Chairmen back and congratulated the Governments for their hard work over the summer. He regretted the absence of the Unionists but welcomed Sinn Fein, adding that it was extremely important that all parties should be present. He also addressed to Mr Murphy an issue which had been raised during Labour's bilateral with Sinn Fein the previous day: that of harassment by the security forces. He said that he felt it was necessary to monitor the situation closely and wondered whether an incident room within the NIO that all participants could feed into would be useful.

12. **Pearl Sagar** also welcomed the Chairmen back and welcomed Sinn Fein. She said that it was a matter of regret that not all parties were there but hoped that the UUP, the UKUP and the DUP would soon be back around the table, adding that the obligation placed on participants by paragraph 20(e) of the Mitchell Report (ie to abide by the outcome of the negotiations) meant that it was necessary for all parties to be involved.

13. After a rather nasty moment for the notetaker when **Gerry Adams** commenced his speech in Irish, he switched to English thanking all the parties for their welcome and recognising that this was an important gathering. He regretted that it had taken so long to

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Mr Sinn Fein to join the process but suggested that perhaps that was the nature of the problem. He stressed that Sinn Fein was committed to remove the causes of conflict and to create real peace. He was disappointed at the absence of the Unionists but hoped that they would be there in future. He acknowledged the commitment of the Chairmen to the process and also that of the two Governments and the other parties and wished all the participants good luck with the negotiations.

14. Finally, **John Hume** welcomed the Chairmen and expressed his party's deep appreciation for their work. He also welcomed Sinn Fein on what he described as a very historic occasion. He stressed the importance of bringing all the parties around the table to address the various sets of relationships and therefore hoped that the Unionists would return and that the participants could soon get back to the main task of substantive negotiations. **Senator Mitchell** expressed his gratitude to Mr Hume for deciding to stay with the process rather than run for the Irish presidency.

15. Responding to the points raised by Lord Alderdice and Mr Curran, **Mr Murphy** indicated that Sinn Fein's concerns about events on the ground had been raised at a meeting with him the previous day. These matters would be dealt with by Adam Ingram, the relevant Minister. He also reminded participants that the Talks process had a sub-committee to deal with confidence-building measures and that such issues could be brought to that sub-committee. On the issue of decommissioning, both Governments had passed Bills in February 1997 and in August had signed the International Agreement which established the Independent Commission. They had made joint approaches to the American, Canadian and Finnish Governments for nominees. He explained he would write to the parties later that day and would brief the

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Commissioners designate later this week so that the Commission could be up and running on 15 September.

16. **Lord Alderdice** queried whether this information would be made public and also asked whether the Commission could report back regularly to the Plenary to highlight any difficulties or needs it might have. **Mr Murphy** explained that one of the problems was the lack of sufficient consensus on the decommissioning proposals but agreed that the Governments were clear that there should be regular reviews. As to publicity, there was no problem generally but he felt it would be important to preserve the identify of the designates until all the participants were aware of their names, but he assured delegates that the letter would come to them very shortly. **Seamus Mallon** drew attention to a potential difficulty, that is that liaison between the Commission and the Plenary would be through a Committee but that that Committee could not be set up until the decommissioning issue was resolved.

17. **Lord Alderdice** picked up on a comment of Mr Adams when he had referred to all the guns being removed from Irish politics and had referred to the RUC and the British Army. **Lord Alderdice** wanted to establish whether this meant that the Irish Army was to be stood down and that in fact he was indicating that there should be no military organisation on the island of Ireland. After a brief resume of Sinn Fein's position in relation to demilitarisation and the British Army, **Mr Adams** stated that Sinn Fein had never mentioned the Irish Army, that it was not involved in Northern Ireland and therefore it was not relevant to call for it to be stood down. **Lord Alderdice** thanked him for this thoughtful response which he believed was of profound significance.

18. There followed a short debate on the issue of televising the Plenary. **Lord Alderdice** explained that this would allow the general

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ation to see what was being done on their behalf and would also avoid participants rushing to the gates following Plenary meetings and presenting a false picture of what had taken place.

Seamus Mallon expressed concern that televising could curtail the honesty of the debate and commented that their Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin which had been televised had become an almost exclusively set-piece performance. It was agreed that this was an issue which delegations would wish to discuss more fully internally and **Senator Mitchell** confirmed that it would be on the agenda of the first Business Committee meeting.

19. There being no other business the **Senator** proposed an adjournment until 14.00 on 15 September which would allow the Governments to meet and deal with the prevailing situation beforehand.

Meeting with Labour

20. At 15.15 the Minister met the Labour delegation. Following a brief discussion of progress, **Malachai Curran** commented that if proximity talks were the way forward this was likely to make things a lot harder for the Loyalists and, indeed, indicated that Labour would not be in favour of such an arrangement, adding that this had been the arrangement in South Africa and it had been a farce.

21. As well as a general discussion about the relative positions of the UUP and Sinn Fein, **Labour** raised the issue of the question over their own representation explaining that, if the Secretary of State came down in favour of the rebel group, they would be prepared to consider a judicial review. **The Minister** undertook to ensure that the Secretary of State was aware of this view.

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Meeting with the SDLP

22. **The Minister** had a brief meeting with the SDLP at 16.00. **John Hume** commented that he was very much not in favour of the idea of TV coverage of the Plenary. The UUP position was discussed and **Seamus Mallon** expressed concern that it appeared that David Trimble always had the facility to run to the Prime Minister whenever something happened that he was not content with: this devalued the process and all of those participating in it. **The Minister** agreed but added that the Prime Minister was deeply committed to making progress and had therefore made strenuous efforts to overcome the obstacles which appeared to be in the UUP's path. **Mr Mallon** commented further that proximity talks appeared to him to represent the worst of all worlds for the UUP in that they would be negotiating at second and third hand. The meeting concluded with a commitment to meet again on Monday.

Meeting with the PUP

23. Finally, **the Minister** met with the PUP at 17.10 to pick up on various issues which had been raised both at the meeting that the PUP had had with Mr Ingram earlier that morning, and those arising from the various protests regarding Loyalist prisoners that had occurred outside the gates at Stormont during the day. **David Ervine** identified 2 separate issues: first, general prisons/justice policing/issues which he agreed had to be discussed as part of the substantive negotiations; and secondly, the perceived difference in treatment between Republican and Loyalist prisoners. **The Minister** recognised the need to adopt a balanced approach and assured Mr Ervine that Mr Ingram would take this on board.

24. **Mr Ervine** noted that it was difficult for both Loyalist parties to make a firm commitment regarding their continued participation in

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Talks in advance of the UUP's decision. However, he had made it clear that he wanted to continue to be part of the process and he and his party were doing all they could to encourage the UUP to persevere. Following a general discussion of what appeared to be the UUP's position the meeting concluded with **the Minister** giving an assurance that he will reinforce the guarantee of the consent principle and that Mr Ingram would revisit the prisons issue.

(Signed)

Ms C P SALTERS

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11 Millbank, Ext 0209

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- Mr N Warner
- Ms Healy
- Messrs Cary,Reid&Poston(via IPL)
- Mrs McNally
- Mr Holmes, No 10

1. cc ~~Mr Carson~~ *Mr Stephens*
 Mr Singh
 2. Mr Brown
 20
 10.9

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS SUMMARY: 9 SEPTEMBER 1997

An historic occasion, albeit one which occurred in a rather low key manner. **Gerry Adams**, on behalf of Sinn Fein confirmed their total and absolute commitment to the 6 Mitchell principles of democracy and non violence.

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the Plenary with the majority of discussions in the pre-meetings (with the Irish and the Chairmen) and the afternoon's bilaterals (with Labour, SDLP and PUP) focused around what could be done and what was being done to encourage the UUP to stay in the process and, indeed, what form the process might take if the UUP decided not to rejoin the process in its current form.

(signed)

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NOTE OF MR MURPHY'S STATEMENT AT THE PLENARY ON 9 SEPTEMBER 1997

I would like to extend a welcome to Sinn Fein today on the occasion of their entry to these talks. Their participation has been made possible by the restoration of the IRA ceasefire on 20 July. The Secretary of State, after due consideration of all relevant evidence, accepted that it marked an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994.

The restoration of the ceasefire has enabled Sinn Fein to take its seat alongside the other parties which received a mandate in the May elections of last year. Like them, it has now affirmed its commitment to the six Mitchell principles of democracy and non violence.

Sinn Fein's commitment to the Mitchell principles ensures that all participants in these talks are on an equal footing in a forum where force of argument replaces the threat of force.

We can now look forward to the real possibility of a fully inclusive talks Process involving the representatives of the whole range of thought and opinion in Northern Ireland. We are firmly committed to the talks moving into substantive negotiations towards a comprehensive and widely acceptable settlement. I urge all participants to use this process to achieve a new beginning for Northern Ireland in which people can be confident their views are represented, and their identities respected.

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