



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Amb Small  
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Confidential

INFORMAL MEETING BETWEEN TANAISTE AND SECRETARY OF STATE

London, 26 January

(1) General Discussion

1. An informal meeting took place between the Tanaiste and the Secretary of State in Lancaster House on 26 January. It began with lunch at 1 pm and concluded at 5.30 pm.
2. The Tanaiste was accompanied by Secretary Dorr, Second Secretary O'Uigin, Ambassador Small, D. O'Donovan, F. Finlay, N. Burgess and the undersigned.
3. The Secretary of State was accompanied by Michael Ancram, Sir John Chilcot, David Fell, Quentin Thomas, Ambassador Blatherwick, Martin Williams and Martin Howard.

SUMMARY

4. - The two sides remained deadlocked on each of the points which are in dispute in the constitutional section of the draft framework document;
  - The Secretary of State sought the deletion of a proposed reference in para 19 to the British Government "having no selfish strategic or economic interest etc". While the British Government was not resiling from the sentiment in question, he considered that its reiteration, which would inevitably provoke Unionist demands for clarification, would be presentationally unhelpful;
  - The Tanaiste replied that the omission of this key element of the Joint Declaration, which was central to the peace process, would be interpreted by nationalists as a departure from agreed policy;
  - The Secretary of State was also unwilling to accept in para 20 the qualification sought by the Irish side in relation to the "territorial claim of

right". He considered that its inclusion would fuel suspicions that the territorial claim was not being withdrawn;

- The Tanaiste emphasized the extreme constraints on the Irish Government's room for manoeuvre in this entire area, particularly in the new political constellation in Dublin;
- Despite this, we had agreed to the major change of removing any claim to exercise jurisdiction over Northern Ireland. For the first time, we would be recognizing formally the existence of two jurisdictions in Ireland. We would also be recasting Art. 2 in more pluralist terms;
- In describing what we were ready to do, however, we had to protect ourselves from any subsequent accusations of bad faith on our part. We had to ensure strict consistency between the terms of this document and whatever the Government might eventually propose by way of Constitutional amendment;
- Later in para 20, the Tanaiste sought the Secretary of State's agreement to the first variant of a phrase which addressed the "legitimacy" point. Underlining the provenance of this variant (the Fianna Fail side of the last Government), he emphasized the importance of its retention in the interests of a successful outcome to a referendum in our jurisdiction;
- The Secretary of State was unhappy with the impression this variant gave (to him) of an unwillingness to accept the outcome of an exercise of choice;
- He also reopened a previously agreed point with a request for the deletion of an explicit reference in para 19 to amendment or replacement of the Government of Ireland Act;
- An offer on his part of a "deal" involving British acceptance of the "no selfish interest" reference in exchange for deletion of the GOIA reference was declined by the Tanaiste;
- Other topics discussed included
  - (i) the British Government's planned Strand One paper (advance notice of which was promised);
  - (ii) its dialogue with Sinn Fein;

(iii) recent confidence-building measures; and

(iv) the Meanscoil Feirste controversy;

- The two sides agreed on a media presentation which would emphasize that a lot of work had been done on the framework document but that a number of complex issues were still outstanding and that Ministers would meet again shortly in the IGC framework.

#### DETAIL

5. This report covers the general exchanges which Ministers had on a number of subjects over lunch and at the outset of the main meeting. A separate report deals with the subsequent discussion of the draft framework document.

The following subjects arose in the earlier part of the meeting:

- the British Government's dialogue with Sinn Fein and with Loyalist representatives;
- the Meanscoil Feirste controversy;
- recent contacts with the parties;
- the British Government's proposed Strand One document;
- confidence-building measures.

#### DIALOGUE WITH SINN FEIN AND LOYALISTS

6. Thomas said that the most recent meeting with Sinn Fein (16 January) had been less stiff than the pre-Christmas meetings. There had been some positive signals (notably Sinn Fein's acceptance that they did have some influence over the IRA which they could use positively). This had, however, been trumped by a reiteration of their long-standing claim to know very little about the IRA. In addition, they had pressed for the holding of inclusive talks to which they could gain instant admission.

They had raised issues such as the question of visits to

Full Sutton prison and the treatment of Meanscoil Feirste. They had welcomed the recent decision on day-time patrolling.

They had complained about apparent British Government briefing of the US Government. Thomas had recalled that it was the British Government who had proposed that the dialogue remain confidential. Sinn Fein, however, had wanted it to be "transparent". The British Government had therefore not felt bound to keep it confidential.

The British side had tabled a paper which was intended to be positive and encouraging. They had made clear that their approach did not reflect a "one-item agenda"; rather, they were ready to consider a range of items for discussion. They had tabled a work-plan which set out the main topics for discussion over the next few meetings and they awaited Sinn Fein's response to this. The arms issue, as far as he could recall, was proposed for the third meeting in the series.

Since the 16 January meeting, they had had some difficulty contacting Sinn Fein. (They wished to let them know about developments in relation to Full Sutton).

7. The previous day's meeting with the Loyalist representatives had revealed a higher degree of engagement. Both of the parties had tabled papers on the arms issue. They had indicated that they themselves had no military capacity but would want to facilitate the decommissioning of weapons when those who wished to carry this out had a clearer view of the future. There had been a good exchange about modalities. The British side had said that they were looking for a willingness in principle to disarm, an agreement on modalities and some tangible decommissioning. The issue was to be discussed further between the two sides.

The meeting had also dealt with the framework document. The Loyalist parties had expressed contempt at the "irresponsibility" of some leading Unionist politicians and had said some useful things to the media about the document following the meeting (as reported e.g. in today's Irish Times).

8. Sinn Fein, Thomas resumed, continued to show great interest in the timing of a meeting with British Ministers. The British side had given them a speaking note on this subject in order to prevent any misunderstandings. Asked by Martin McGuinness whether Ministers would be attending within a fortnight, Thomas had replied that they would not but that he hoped that, if there was an engagement on Sinn Fein's part, the point could be reached where Ministers would wish to join

before Easter.

Ancram added that the Loyalist representatives had made clear that it was very difficult for them to envisage decommissioning on their side without the same happening on the other side.

9. Ancram confirmed to the Tanaiste that news of the Full Sutton development had been conveyed to Sinn Fein.

O hUiginn said that we had done likewise on our own side.

The Secretary of State said he knew that the Irish Government would attach importance to this development. He had told the Home Secretary that he had himself modified the rules for prison visits in Northern Ireland in the wake of the two ceasefires. In the case of Full Sutton, it had been agreed that a single visitor would see all of the prisoners concerned. He hoped that the "provenance" of this visitor would not be emphasized unduly.

10. Thomas confirmed to the Tanaiste that no Irish language issues other than the Meanscoil Feirste had arisen in the talks with Sinn Fein. The British side had been encouraging the latter to come forward with views on economic and social issues.

The Secretary of State told O hUiginn that he had not discussed with the Home Secretary, during either of the phone conversations they had had on the Full Sutton issue, the question of Feidhlim O hAdhmaill's use of Irish during prison visits.

Thomas said that Sinn Fein had brought up this question, but without making clear (as the British had subsequently learned from the Irish side) that O hAdhmaill's children were monolingual. The British team had reported the matter directly to the Home Office.

11. Asked by the Tanaiste if the British side had made clear to Sinn Fein that they were ready to engage with them on all issues, Thomas confirmed that they had. He had indicated that Ministers were not hanging back in any way but were anxious to meet Sinn Fein. However, their decision on timing would be informed by a sign that Sinn Fein were ready to engage on issues across the board in a workmanlike fashion. He had suggested a schedule of meetings taking place possibly once a week (or more intensively if Sinn Fein preferred). He had offered a personal prediction that Ministers would want to join if that schedule was adhered to.

Chilcot described the probability of a Ministerial

meeting with Sinn Fein as "six or higher on a scale of zero to ten".

12. The Secretary of State commented that Sinn Fein wished to enter the talks process straight away and that, as far as he was concerned, "the sooner they're in, the better". However, the British Government required them to show that some progress was being made; otherwise, the Government would lose a lot of credibility and Unionist suspicions would be inflamed. He believed that the Government was right to stipulate "substantial progress" and he recalled that the Taoiseach had stood by this approach at the Downing Street meeting last month.
13. Asked by Chilcot if the account just given squared with the Irish Government's own assessment of the situation, O'Uiginn said that a meeting between the Government and Sinn Fein was scheduled for the following morning (27 January), the first formal meeting since the Government had assumed office. Sinn Fein's assessment of the most recent meeting with the British Government was that this had been a helpful meeting for one reason only - the development in the British Government's position on the arms issue.

They felt that they had made what was, in their terms, an advance by acknowledging that they had some influence over the IRA. Their position on this point was very guarded but they intended it to be helpful.

Their general view was that the British knew that Sinn Fein could not deliver on the arms issue and were pursuing, accordingly, a purely tactical agenda in this area. Sinn Fein's response tended to be to resort to tactics of their own (with their insistence that it was purely a matter for the IRA etc). Against this background, they felt that the most recent meeting constituted a step into the real world.

They recognized that the arms issue was a very important one for both Governments. However, there was no history of any side in Ireland (beginning with the UVF) ever having given up its weapons. This would be an absolutely new development. It could only come, in Sinn Fein's view, as part of an overall confidence-building process which would involve decommissioning of arms across the board.

The Tanaiste had summed it up some time ago with his remark that nobody could regard this exercise as complete until the arms issue was satisfactorily addressed.

14. Chilcot asked whether Sinn Fein understood "in an adult way" that the dialogue with other parties to which they

demanded to be admitted would not take place without progress on this issue.

The Tanaiste pointed to a conundrum in this respect. The problem could not ultimately be solved without the arms issue being dealt with - yet we were now almost in a situation in which we could not even begin to solve it without the issue being dealt with. Despite the efforts of both sides to remove it, a serious road-block existed in this regard.

Thomas hoped that the formula about Sinn Fein's "influence over the IRA" would give Sinn Fein cover to engage with the British side on this issue.

15. The Secretary of State considered it important that the British Government had not yet defined what it meant by "substantial progress"; this left open a potentially wide range of measures.

He asked the Tanaiste how the Government was approaching this issue with Sinn Fein.

In reply, the Tanaiste observed that the Government's meeting with Sinn Fein on the following day would be the first formal meeting. The matter had arisen in informal contacts with Gerry Adams over recent weeks and Adams had indicated his appreciation of how serious the issue was. The Government would be reinforcing this point at the meeting on the following day. In general terms, our approach was to recognize the importance of the issue but at the same time not to give it unwarranted prominence; we did not wish any vacuum to be created in the peace process.

16. O hUiginn mentioned strong suspicions that the whole arms issue was "a spanner, selected by Mr Molyneaux, to be thrown in the path of prospective talks". It would be offered as yet another justification for a Unionist refusal to come to the negotiating table.

Realistically, this issue would only be tackled further down the road. Sinn Fein, he added, also had difficulty with suggestions that a readiness "in principle" to decommission should be flagged. They would be very reluctant, for reasons of principle, to sign up to something which they could not deliver.

17. The Secretary of State said that he was familiar with the Irish tradition of "pikes in the thatch" etc. However, it was a little beguiling for anyone to suggest that, just because something had never been done before, it could not now be done. After all, plenty of new things were being done in the peace process.

The Tanaiste observed that Sinn Fein were stating merely as a matter of fact that this had never been done before. They were describing a historical reality.

#### MEANSCOIL FEIRSTE

18. The Secretary of State said he had had a good meeting with Joe Hendron and the two governors of the school (the editor of an Andersonstown newspaper and an Irish language activist). He had told them that he was obliged to stick to the formula which governed British Government grant-aid support for secondary schools. There had to be an intake of sixty which would come up to a minimum of three hundred within five years. In the case of the Meanscoil, 37 had been admitted this year and 42-43 were due next year. The Meanscoil was, therefore, a long way behind the requirement. The head of the school had indicated that it would be accelerating a lot. The Secretary of State had welcomed this but had repeated that he had to hold to the Government's policy. (He mentioned that an integrated school in Fermanagh had also caused some difficulties last year).

The Secretary of State had undertaken, however, to take a serious look at the possibility of finding money for the Meanscoil on an ad hoc basis from some other source. While he could not promise anything in this respect, he hoped that it would be possible nevertheless to relieve some of the burden on the Meanscoil.

He had taken on board much of what the Tanaiste had said to him on this subject. He genuinely wanted to encourage the Irish language. The Meanscoil was a very new school, of course, and it was still unclear whether it would be possible to take certain exams there in Irish. But he had been told that, as a result of a recent "Open Day", a level of 70% would be achieved next time (?).

19. Ancram said that the GCSE was available at the school but that other exams had yet to be provided for. The British Government was seeking a way to help parents to maintain an independent school.

O' Donovan noted that the annual running costs of the Meanscoil were estimated at roughly £80,000. Would the funding which was now to be sought be ad hoc but recurrent?

The Secretary of State replied that funding for even one

year was better than none at all. He hoped that funding could be provided on a recurrent basis but he could not be sure. Ancram said they hoped to obtain funding for more than one year.

Noting that the Meanscoil was seeking assistance with current expenditure, O' Donovan asked whether British Ministers would also look into the possibility of providing capital funding.

The Secretary of State replied that the school required an estimated £2 million for capital purposes (acquisition of a better site etc). Ancram mentioned a figure of £5 million overall to provide a better school. The difficulty in relation to helping it with capital costs was that capital was not given to the integrated schools until they passed the five-year test.

When O' Donovan suggested an exceptional capital subsidy to the Meanscoil, Ancram replied that this could not be done from the education budget. The Secretary of State said the matter had not arisen specifically in his discussion with the school authorities.

20. Ambassador Small suggested that the British Government's experience with Welsh language schools was relevant. Ancram pointed out that the threshold of three hundred pupils was half the normal (UK-wide) requirement. In an urban area like Belfast, a minimum of six hundred would usually be required. The lower threshold reflected the special nature of the education being provided through such schools.

Ambassador Small emphasized the need for the British Government to be seen to be actively promoting the Irish language and to avoid the negative publicity caused by controversies of this kind.

Ancram said that the Government would shortly be announcing its education expenditure. He hoped that some of that might be welcomed, particularly in the minority community. He had to operate within limited resources, however; a shortage of resources would clearly lessen his ability to spread funding more widely.

The Secretary of State echoed this ("we're all strapped") and mentioned the straitened circumstances of a Newtownards school which he had visited recently.

#### CONTACTS WITH THE PARTIES AND STRAND ONE DOCUMENT

21. Asked about the Government's meeting earlier in the day

with the SDLP, the Tanaiste described this as a helpful meeting. The SDLP had emphasized their wish to see the framework document completed. John Hume also wished to see substantive talks begin as soon as possible between the British Government and Sinn Fein.

Very serious concern had been expressed about the British Government's proposed Strand One document. The Tanaiste had made clear that the Irish Government had not been consulted about the paper and were unaware of its contents. The SDLP view was that, if the framework document was supposed to be balanced and acceptable to both Governments, the same balance would have to be reflected in the Strand One document. Hume had emphasized that there was no point publishing at the same time as the framework document a second document which was not balanced.

The Tanaiste had mentioned that he had been challenged on this issue by Deputy Des O'Malley earlier in the week and had replied in conciliatory terms. (The Secretary of State interrupted to thank him for this).

The Tanaiste suggested that the Secretary of State might reciprocate by being of assistance to him in relation to the document.

22. The Secretary of State replied that he had previously made clear that there would be no surprises in the document (particularly to anyone familiar with the Strand One sub-committee's work in 1992). It was important, however, that both Governments should observe the sensitivities involved.

Chilcot asked whether the SDLP had expressed any particular anxieties about the potential contents of the document.

O hUiginn said that the meeting with the Government had been brief and had not gone into detail. Seamus Mallon had put matters very cogently: it was now time to merge the peace process with the political process. The sooner we could get dialogue off the ground, the sooner the two elements could merge into a single process.

The SDLP had been taken aback on hearing that the Irish Government had not been consulted on the proposed Strand One document. The concerns they had expressed to the Government included worries about terminology and insensitive language.

Recalling Hume's reservations about the model proposed by the 1992 sub-committee (e.g., would the "panel" appoint political Heads of Department? would it come to the

Assembly? etc), O hUiginn warned the British side in general terms not to jeopardize SDLP support by putting forward proposals for devolution "in the wrong livery".

23. The Tanaiste suggested that the article in that day's Financial Times would, if anything, reinforce SDLP fears. It was particularly unhelpful in the context of Molyneaux's remarks the previous Saturday.

He warned that, if there were aspects of either the content or presentation of the Strand One document which caused the Irish Government difficulty, the whole process could be seriously set back.

Thomas suggested that it might be equally problematic if the SDLP were to embrace the framework document while the Unionists held back. A slight frisson on the SDLP's part in relation to the Strand One paper, and "more than a slight frisson" in relation to the framework document, could be helpful in terms of Unionist reactions.

24. Asked by Thomas whether the SDLP had expressed any reservations about sitting down with Sinn Fein in advance of a substantive move on the arms issue, the Tanaiste replied that they had not. Members of the SDLP who had been privately anti-Sinn Fein in the past were now anxious to see them involved in talks.

O hUiginn said that the sensitive issue for the SDLP was the question of electoral pacts with Sinn Fein; the idea of dialogue with Sinn Fein had never been a problem for them.

The Tanaiste added that the SDLP would face future elections confidently provided the revised recommendations made by the Boundary Commission were not changed.

25. Ancram said that, in Strand One, there would be points which would challenge everyone. From his contacts with the parties last year, he had a fairly clear view of what was acceptable to each. This would be reflected in the British Government paper.

Dorr recalled that there had never been a united SDLP endorsement of the 1992 sub-committee's report. As for the Irish Government, he noted that it would be expected to "sing a duet" with the British Government in relation to the Strand One document, as both documents were to be launched simultaneously. It would be helpful in that regard to know "what the tune is".

The Tanaiste agreed, urging on the Secretary of State the need to act politically in this matter and not to incur

potentially explosive risks.

26. Chilcot saw the problem as one of "getting through a tremendous dust-storm" over the first few days following publication of both documents.

Dorr distinguished between consultation on the text (which implied the possibility of changing it) and advance knowledge of it.

Chilcot asked whether it was relevant to the negotiation of the final details of the framework document that the Irish Government should have some sense of the contents of the Strand One document.

27. The Tanaiste said that he would not be happy if there was no input from the Irish Government in this area. Endorsing Dorr's point, he suggested that there could be a middle ground between consultation and advance information/knowledge of the text. It would be disastrous if the Irish Government did not have advance sight of the document. As it was, the two Governments would have to do a lot of work together in preparation for the launch of the framework document (as had happened in the run-up to the Anglo-Irish Agreement). He emphasized that he would be carrying the political risk in Dail Eireann and elsewhere for the failure to consult the Irish Government on the Strand One document.

O'Donovan observed that people were now used to the idea of the two Governments driving the process. The Tanaiste would be under pressure to explain why the Irish Government was not being consulted. The SDLP concerns on this point reflected the concerns of nationalist opinion on the ground.

28. The Secretary of State accepted that there was a difficulty for the Tanaiste. While he could not contemplate "consultation", he took the point about the Irish Government having advance "knowledge" of the document.

O hUiginn hoped that the Irish side would not be pushed into giving a possibly discordant reaction to the document when it appeared. While not expecting an operational input to it, we would need a clear picture of its proposed content. We would give comments which the British side could take or leave.

The Tanaiste suggested that the handling of this exercise by officials rather than Ministers (he mentioned O hUiginn and Chilcot) should protect the Secretary of State's position. He asked the Secretary of State to give this matter careful consideration.

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29.

Asked about the Irish Government's contacts with Unionists, the Tanaiste said that, while his own personal contacts had been necessarily limited over recent months for obvious reasons, members of his party had had contact with various individuals.

He said that he had been appalled by Jim Molyneaux's interview the previous Saturday (indeed, he had been relatively restrained in his public response to it). Time and time again, the Irish Government had made clear that joint authority was not on its agenda. A number of factors might explain the remarks (e.g., Molyneaux's advancing years, a need to respond to internal jockeying for position or some elaborate tactical calculation). There was no doubt, however, that the remarks had been irresponsible and unhelpful and that message should be got across to the UUP leader.

At the same time, the Irish Government recognized the need to address the genuine fears of Unionists in relation to the framework document (as opposed to scare-mongering). But we wondered to what extent the Unionists actually heard us.

30.

Ancram replied that Unionists did hear the Irish Government but the question was whether they trusted it. Leadership challenges were certainly one element in the current "jumpiness" of Unionists. It would be a grave error, however, to think that that was the limit of their jumpiness. They genuinely feared that the two Governments were hatching up something which, for all their talk about consultation etc, they would ultimately impose. They also feared that, for all the clever language in the document, we were setting up something which would effectively be joint authority. There was also an element of fear about a "slippery slope" etc.

Ambassador Small suggested that there was an additional worry on the part of the UUP about the DUP. Ancram felt that greater fear was directed towards fellow members of the UUP.

The Tanaiste said that he would never underestimate the extent of fears and insecurities in the Northern Ireland parties across the board. A more positive counter-view which he had encountered from some personal contacts, however, was that people attached great importance to what had happened in recent months and (in contrast to the reaction to the Anglo-Irish Agreement) saw the value of cooperation with the Irish Government.

31.

Ancram drew a distinction between hard-line Unionism in rural areas, which would take considerable persuasion,

and a more intellectual and relaxed brand of Unionism, in urban areas.

Fell said that, from personal observation at community level, he felt that matters were not yet at a crisis point. He mentioned that, both during a visit by Sir John Wheeler to Newry the previous day and at a Chamber of Commerce function which he himself had attended earlier in the week, the issues which people raised were not major political questions but "bread-and-butter" issues (e.g., the need for road improvement). The vast majority, in other words, did not see themselves "on a slippery slope to Irish unity" etc. On the other hand, however, a more complacent strand of opinion which he had detected in the Unionist community held that the situation was now much improved and there was no need to seek an accommodation with the other tradition.

32. Dorr observed that, in contrast to 1973 and more particularly 1985 (when the two Governments had announced that they would be putting certain arrangements in place), the Governments on this occasion would merely be tabling a document which would invite the parties to talks. These talks would in turn have to reach agreement before there could be a referendum etc. Thus, there were successive layers of reassurance for the parties.

Furthermore, this was the first attempt at a settlement which involved potential change to the Irish Constitution. Writing consent into our Constitution would give Unionists the maximum guarantee against any "slippery slope" scenario.

The two Governments should work to get the best possible mileage from these two points.

33. The Secretary of State agreed. The rising profile of the framework document was, of course, contributing to the problem. People were frightened by it and in such circumstances rational considerations such as those mentioned by Dorr "take the back seat".

Ambassador Small observed that John Taylor had fallen offside with his own colleagues. The Secretary of State agreed emphatically, describing Taylor as "all over the place".

34. O hUiginn saw a danger of a deep psychological mismatch between Unionists and nationalists. Unionists could well claim (as Fell had suggested) that the violence was now over and it was time to get on with 'normal business' etc. There was undoubtedly an attitude which said: "We're the incumbents...and what we have, we hold".

But why were Unionists not being asked to recognize that, if they were serious about making the Union permanent, they would have to make Northern Ireland an acceptable political entity - which meant winning over an as yet dissident minority. Nobody had defined what happened to Northern Ireland for as long as it remained part of the Union. Unless Unionists acquired a more statesmanlike approach, they would themselves contribute to making the Union impermanent.

The Secretary of State agreed, saying that Unionists must recognize the need to provide "items of substantive comfort for nationalists".

35. Dorr recalled that a UUP document of several years ago, "An End to Drift", had said some positive things about the onus on Unionists to bring nationalists in from the cold etc.

O hUiginn observed that the concept of "nothing being imposed" could be interpreted by Unionists as meaning that "we don't have to do anything". How could this be prevented? The Secretary of State reiterated that it would have to be made clear to Unionists (as the framework document did) that they must be prepared to provide substantial comfort to nationalists. Ancram added that, if Unionists wanted accountable institutions in Northern Ireland once again, they could only get these by recognizing certain realities.

36. Fell supported O hUiginn's analysis. It was important that Unionists began to accept the need for movement. By definition, no side could get everything that it wanted. The choice lay between the "what we have, we hold" mentality and the achievement of lasting peace. What had depressed him most in recent months had been the Unionist response to the QUB decision on the playing of the national anthem. This demonstrated how far we still had to go.

37. Asked by the Tanaiste for an account of the Prime Minister's meeting with Mr Molyneux earlier in the week, the Secretary of State replied that it had been a private meeting. He could say, however, that the Prime Minister had been disturbed by the Molyneux interview on the previous Saturday and had done his best to reassure the UUP leader - not entirely successfully. Subsequently, however, there had been signs of greater trust in the British Government.

CVONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

8. At the beginning of the main meeting, the Tánaiste asked about the British Government's recent patrolling decisions.

The Secretary of State said that they wanted to maintain the momentum of the peace process. No security measures had been taken, or would be taken, other than on the advice of the Chief Constable and the GOC. They wanted to get soldiers off the streets and had done this in Derry and Belfast at the level of routine Army patrolling. Newry and the area to the east of it had been added in the last day or so. They had no reluctance about reducing troop levels in Northern Ireland. It was easy enough to arrange military training in Britain as long as the soldiers remained allocated to the NI task. The importance of this issue was fully recognized.

As for the RUC, there had been a substantial reduction in overtime (from roughly 17,000 hours daily to roughly 12,000). It was necessary to continue with the reinforcement of some RUC stations (at Middleton, Co. Armagh, and at Corry Square in Newry). The reason for this was that they could not be sure that the peace would not be broken. In areas where stations had been attacked or were foreseeably at risk, and where it was possible to harden the roofs of the RUC stations concerned, he had not felt able to take the risk of not carrying out this work. Sir John Wheeler had visited Newry the previous day and had found absolutely no local anxiety. They were explaining everywhere what the purpose of this work was.

Chilcot added that the general doctrine was that no irreversible steps should yet be taken as the situation did not yet warrant this. He also mentioned that the rate of Catholic recruitment to the RUC had doubled since the IRA ceasefire (and was on a mounting curve). Sinn Fein were discomfited by the RUC's relative success in ensuring good policing since the ceasefire. As regards special powers, these were up for annual renewal shortly. The declining use of these powers was important.

39. O hUiginn said that the changes which had become known the previous day were very welcome. The Government had not commented publicly on them only because we understood that the British Government did not particularly want publicity for the measures. In relation to Corry Square, intelligent use had been made of the local Civil Representatives. However, in relation to Middleton, the British should be sensitive about building fortifications on the border now. More generally, there had been an expectation that more troops would be sent back to Britain. People were worried that, if troops were to be kept in Northern Ireland, there would be a continuing

need for accommodation and new building programmes would attract undesirable controversy.

The Secretary of State replied that a wall was due to be built at Middleton. He knew that Seamus Mallon was upset at this. No large-scale accommodation build was anticipated. The Army, he continued, would like to get out of Northern Ireland and the RUC would like to see that happening. But the contingency risk was a restraining factor.

40. Chilcot mentioned local nationalist perceptions of an increase in patrolling in Armagh. The explanation for this was that helicopter patrols had been much reduced and, as a result, people were seeing more soldiers by day. In fact, however, there were now fewer patrols.

O hUiginn commented that there had not been a reduction in patrolling in Co. Tyrone - an area where, whether coincidentally or not, we received the highest number of complaints.

41. O' Donovan noted that the decisions in relation to Derry and Belfast had received publicity. None had been intended for the more recent decisions (though, by whatever means, news had in fact got out). He suggested that there was an overriding political reason to let people know of these developments. This was a point which we had made in occasional informal contact with the Army.

The Secretary of State replied that "we are not very good at this at the moment and we must get a grip on our publicity effort". Such was the degree of devolution within the Army and the RUC that a decision on whether or not to withdraw daylight patrols was taken at a relatively low level. HQ had heard of the latest decision, for example, three days after it had been taken. He accepted that an improved publicity effort was required.

*David Donoghue*

David Donoghue  
30 January 1995