



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/97/5

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

COPY TO:	
✓	PST
✓	PSS
✓	MR. F MURRAY
✓	MR. P TEAHON
✓	MR. S. DONLON
✓	MR. T DALTON

FAX

19 October, 1995.

Mr. Seán O hUiginn,
Second Secretary,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
St. Stephen's Green,
DUBLIN 2.



Dear Secretary,

Discussion with US Embassy

In the absence of Michael Habib, Minister Counsellor, I had a discussion this morning with Blair Hall of the US Embassy who attended the talks between Tony Lake and the various parties in London.

As a general introductory point Hall said that Lake was anxious to avoid creating the impression that he had come to London with ready-made proposals or a plan. He was here to try to help narrow the differences but would not want "US fingerprints" on the outcome. In the conversation with Mayhew and Ancram, Lake had posed the direct question as to how best he could help. He had pointed to Sinn Féin's essential distrust of the British side and their need for a text. Lake realised, and had said to Mayhew, that a text emanating directly from the British side presented problems for Sinn Féin. He had therefore suggested that the US could help with working out a formulation with Adams that need not have British authorship on for example the issue of whether to call the arms "illegal" or "paramilitary". Mayhew had not been open to this proposal. He appreciated Lake's efforts to help narrow the differences but did not think that discussion of texts at this stage was the way to go. They would prefer to continue their efforts directly with Sinn Féin. The Ancram/McGuinness talks needed to be more concrete, to "discuss actual things"; this was difficult but the British side felt they were getting closer. Ancram had said that the issue was not the form of words,

- 2 -

e.g. whether arms are described as "illegal" or "paramilitary", but the need for clarity on concepts - essentially the assurance that Sinn Féin can and will deal with the arms issue however it is described on paper. Hall described the British response as "thanks, but butt out" on the question of drafting. Lake had taken this in the spirit in which it was given.

Timetable

Lake had emphasised the need to move quickly comparing the process to a bicycle ride - if the bicycle does not keep going forward it falls over. Mayhew had acknowledged this. Hall said that he could not say that the British were dragging their feet but he personally was not convinced that the British view of the timescales was the same as the American and Irish one. I asked Hall if the British side had mentioned any timescale or target date for the all-party talks, say three or four months. He replied that he had seen periods of this kind referred to in reports from Dublin but no specific period had been mentioned in Lake's discussion with the British side. The furthest Mayhew had gone had been to say that the timescale for the Commission had to be sufficient to allow for a sensible discussion on the arms issue. Mayhew had certain fears about establishing target dates that could not be held and the consequences of failure to meet unrealistic deadlines. The discussion had been somewhat vague on this point but in general the overall US assessment was that he was prepared to consider a target date as long as it was practical.

Composition of Commission

Hall said that further work needed to be done on this. The US was prepared to offer suggestions, but these should not be seen as endorsements. He mentioned the Canadian judge and said there were one or two Swedish names. Lake had also mentioned a former Chief Justice of Zimbabwe as someone of potential interest (I should perhaps mention that in a conversation with President Atissari of Finland yesterday he said that if we were looking to Finland he might have a good candidate for us).

- 3 -

Unionists and Twin-Track

Hall said that he had seen reports to the effect that the British wanted to ensure UUP involvement in the twin-track process before proceeding. He did not want to be categorical on this but his sense of the discussion with Mayhew and Ancram was that they were less emphatic on the point than some reports might suggest. The issue in his view was less a question of Unionist participation as a precondition and more a question of not forcing choices on the UUP too early. The US position was that neither Sinn Féin nor the Unionists should have a veto but clearly we needed the maximum possible acquiescence by the two sides.

Meeting with Trimble

Hall felt that they had had a good conversation with Trimble; he was in good debating form and had his arguments marshalled and points ready. They were not sure in advance whether Taylor would be there and in the event the two had played off each other in a way that was not necessarily helpful. Trimble had "turned florrid" at one or two points and had become particularly irritable when Lake had commented on how he could use the evident trust shown in him by the Unionist community (to exercise leadership). Trimble had reacted strongly saying that Lake did not know the Unionist community and that even as leader his room for manoeuvre was strictly limited.

I asked Hall whether the Embassy continued to take the view expressed forcefully to me last week by Ambassador Crowe that "the Ulsters will not move on twin track". He thought this remained the Ambassador's view but he himself would be less definite. The Assembly idea was important to Trimble. The Americans had urged him to consider it as an idea that could be encompassed in the twin track discussions. But Trimble had emphasised that he saw it as an alternative to twin track. He had, however, gone to some pains to explain that he did not see the Assembly as part of an internal settlement, that it would be limited in scope and that it could have a strand 2 (and strand 3) dimension. For example Trimble had suggested that representatives of the Assembly could travel to Dublin for discussions on cross-border institutions. In an aside on the Assembly question Hall said that the Americans had the impression that Hume might have more

- 4 -

difficulties with the Assembly proposal than Sinn Féin.

I asked Hall if the question of Trimble's visit to Washington had come up. He said that Lake had confirmed a meeting with the Vice President. Lake had said that he has recommended that the President see Trimble and that he (Lake) was not without influence on such matters! But there was a genuine diary problem.

Yours sincerely,

Ted Barrington
Ambassador