



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Mr. Lake  
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**MEETING BETWEEN THE TÁNAISTE AND THE  
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER,  
THE WHITE HOUSE, 10 APRIL 1996**

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MR. P. TEAHON	
MR. S. DONLON	
MR. T. DALTON	

1. The meeting, which was held in Mr Lake's office, lasted about forty minutes. Apart from a brief discussion on Bosnia at the beginning, the meeting dealt exclusively with Northern Ireland issues. The Tánaiste was accompanied by Secretary MacKernan, Mr John Foley and Ambassador Gallagher, while Mr Lake was joined by Nancy Soderberg and Mary Ann Peters.

**Marching season**

2. Lake asked about the possible impact of the marching season on the peace process. The Tánaiste, who praised the Deputy Chief Constable's firm handling of this week's march in Belfast, made the point that some slight re-routing of parades could help avoid much tension. We will be monitoring the situation carefully and staying in very close contact with the British authorities on it. Ambassador Gallagher added that, if the firm and fair handling of Orange parades that we witnessed over the weekend continued, this could have a positive effect on the ground in nationalist areas.

**Elections/Forum**

3. Lake, in saying that the British had indicated to him that their legislation on the forthcoming elections might be ready by the end of the week, asked the Tánaiste for his views on the way ahead. Mr Spring said that, while nationalists remained strongly opposed to elections, he had been emphasising to them the need to focus on the bigger picture, the opening of all-party talks on the 10th June. It was essential in this regard that the proposed forum did not interfere with these negotiations. Secretary MacKernan said that Adams would be guided in his approach to the elections by

Hume and the SDLP, and was waiting for the latter to decide their position. The overall view was that, albeit reluctantly, the SDLP had no real option but to take part in the elections.

4. Lake said he agreed "absolutely" with the Tánaiste's view on the need to keep the negotiations completely separate from the forum, adding that he felt the relationship between the two was probably the key issue for nationalists.
5. The Tánaiste also expressed a concern that the legislation on the elections might be in some danger of being amended in an unhelpful way by Unionists, with the support of some Tory backbenchers. Lake made the point that, in such circumstances, Tony Blair and the Labour Party should strongly support the Government. He would raise this issue with Blair when he met the Labour Leader during his visit to Washington later this week.

#### Ground Rules Paper

6. The Tánaiste said he hoped a text of the Ground Rules Paper would be agreed between the British and ourselves early next week. He emphasised the importance of maintaining the balance of the initial text, and the danger of any move to change this in a unionist direction. Lake strongly endorsed this view, adding that as the general perception was that the elections favoured the unionists, and given that Hume and Adams liked the initial text of the ground rules paper, it was very important for nationalists that this initial balance be maintained. Turning to Soderberg, he said that "we need to keep pushing the Brits on this".

### Decommissioning

7. The Tánaiste warned about the danger of the negotiations on 10th June becoming stalemated at the outset on decommissioning. If this happened, we were back to square one. He suggested that one way to circumvent the problem might be to establish a separate Strand Four to the talks, dealing exclusively with decommissioning. Lake said that he had "raised the same thought" with the British, but they had responded "hesitatingly".
8. Lake added that the Governments must reach agreement in advance on the action they would take in response to particular contingencies - for instance, if the Unionists decided to walk out of the talks. Ambassador Gallagher said that the handling of decommissioning was crucial. In this regard, if Sinn Féin had the reassurance that they would be entering into serious and sustained negotiations on the 10th June, it could have a very positive impact on the debate to restore the ceasefire.

### Chairmanship of Strand Two

9. In a discussion on the Chairmanship of Strand Two, the Tánaiste spoke of the particular skills and attributes which George Mitchell would bring to the job, including being best placed to deal effectively with Sinn Féin and the loyalist participants. Mr Spring said he felt that the British hesitancy about Mitchell might relate more to his nationality than to anything else. Lake agreed, adding that "the problem was not George but his passport"!
10. Soderberg raised the question of whether, if Mitchell was not acceptable, de Chastelain might make a suitable choice for Strand Two, with Mitchell possibly chairing the decommissioning Strand. The Tánaiste said that, while the General had

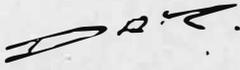
been an effective member of the Mitchell decommissioning team, his background was more military than political. Overall, he simply did not see him as a suitable choice for the Strand Two position. Ambassador Gallagher added that, given their roles in the decommissioning Commission and their respective skills, it would be almost bizarre to have de Chastelain chairing Strand Two and Mitchell chairing a separate decommissioning Strand. Lake seemed to agree very much with the Irish view.

Contact with parties

11. Lake said he had not been in touch with the Party Leaders for some time, but would probably begin a new round of telephone calls on the following day. He would stay in contact with us on this.

Patrick Kelly

12. The Tánaiste emphasised that if Kelly died in a British jail, it would present a serious problem. The last thing we all needed was a martyr. The prisoner issue was very important, and it was unfortunate that the British had made no concession in this area. Lake said that, when he had raised the issue with London, they argued that Kelly was not as seriously ill as Washington had been led to believe. He would now, however, take the case up again.

  
Dermot Gallagher

10 April 1996