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the Tarbark this is my own analysis of the UUP paper

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Pathways to Peace within the Union: UUP, 4 March 1997

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1. This paper, the preparation of which has been signalled by the UUP on several occasions since Christmas, is represented as a set of "interim measures to be complementary to the existing Talks, and [to] assist party members to gain knowledge and experience while determining their policies."
2. Viewed *tactically*, the paper can be seen as a somewhat cynical attempt, equivalent to the UUP paper presented just before the end of the 1992 Talks, to claim - not least for electoral purposes - the moral high ground of meaningful activity, safe in the knowledge that the current political climate, and the imminence of the elections, will prevent any serious response from others.
3. Viewed *substantively*, despite the claim that its proposals are complementary to the Talks, and "involve no constitutional compromise or aspirational sacrifice by anyone", the paper presents a minimalist agenda which, if fulfilled, might well satisfy substantial elements within unionism, and make their meaningful involvement in subsequent negotiations less likely.

Detail/Analysis

4. The opening analysis section begins by stating baldly that "The Talks presided over by Senator Mitchell were created to provide a mechanism for the involvement of Sinn Fein/IRA in the political process." The current position is that "SF/IRA is embarked upon a vicious, cynical and provocative campaign." "Ulster Unionists will not allow themselves to be drawn into a position which provides for the arrival at the table of Sinn Fein." There is no evidence of a commitment to peaceful means, and SF have rejected the principle of consent. The paper approvingly quotes the view of John Hume that "to vote for Sinn Fein/IRA is to support their murder campaign". The UUP's views have been unchanged since the autumn. Decommissioning remains an impasse because "SDLP, Dublin and some others see Sinn Fein at the table immediately after a cease-fire (even if that is tactical) and a signing up to the Mitchell principles."
5. The paper acknowledges that it is hard to see a bridge between the two positions, and that they are unlikely to change before, during or after an election: but it is hoped that "there will be an opportunity to explore the views recently expressed by John Hume and others, that the Talks can continue without Sinn Fein/IRA."
6. The paper goes on to express the view that the present hiatus should not paralyse political leaders, but that a variety of interim issues could be examined, not as a "final resolution" but to "build on the wide areas of common interest that exist, and [to] ensure that there is no vacuum." Such measures would be complementary to the Talks.

Comment: This is a predictably depressing and hardline restatement of the UUP position on Sinn Féin participation and decommissioning, though it is more rhetorical than detailed. Opportunistically, it seizes on recent comments by John Hume, and on the consent issue. Its bald statement that the Talks were created to provide a means of involving Sinn Féin in the political process is at variance with the much wider statement of objectives in the Ground Rules (which in turn carry

much material forward from the 1991/2 process) and begs the question of why, in that case, the UUP has participated in this endeavour for nine months. We have never concealed the fact that our analysis reinforces the desirability of an inclusive process, but it has been made clear on many occasions that the primary purpose of the talks, as in 1992, is to achieve a new beginning for all the relationships.

The UUP misstates the position of the Government on Sinn Féin's entry to the talks (a restored ceasefire must be unequivocal and credible, not tactical - and any return to violence would lead to ejection). It also omits to acknowledge that the view ascribed to the SDLP and the Government is also that of the British Government, Alliance, and the four small parties.

While it implicitly rejects the Mitchell Report as the basis for decommissioning, the UUP cannot bring itself to do so openly.

Given that the UUP have, with the other Unionist parties, refused for nine months to enter into substantive negotiations, it strains credulity that they should now, on the eve of an election campaign and the adjournment of the talks, display such concern about a vacuum or hiatus.

7. Four specific measures are proposed:

- the establishment of an informal but structured relationship between the Government and local politicians, to enable the latter to contribute to inward investment, develop their knowledge of administration, and contribute to policy formulation: "it might be that small groups of politicians, drawn on a proportional basis from those parties currently participating in the Talks, could be invited by the responsible Minister to advise on a Department by Department basis."

Comment: Such a process of consultation between the British Government and local politicians would be a proper subject for discussion in Strand One. Presented in isolation, it will appear to nationalists as part of a minimalist agenda intended to substitute for more structured developments. Cynics might observe that in recent weeks the UUP has had little difficulty in making its views on contentious local issues known to the Government.

- the replacement of the Association of Local Authorities in Northern Ireland (ALANI) by a revitalised or alternative body which would confine its role to local government matters, and would be representative of all Councils. The UUP "are prepared to discuss how its principal committees and office-bearers could be reflective of the main political traditions as well as geographic diversity in Northern Ireland."

Comment: ALANI as a body is in disarray, and had through its politicisation lost the support of nationalist councils. In principle, there might well be scope for a new body of the type proposed. The UUP's recognition of the need for cross-community and geographic balance is welcome. However, as

with measure 1, these issues would best be handled in Strand 1. The UUP's proposals would carry more conviction if in practice unionist-controlled councils engaged in systematic power-sharing, and if nominations to public bodies (eg the Housing Council) were fairly distributed.

While the UUP remain wholly opposed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and will continue to seek the removal of Articles 2 and 3, they accept that there "continues to be scope for co-operation with the Irish Republic on matters of mutual interest and benefit, as was the case in the days of the Stormont Government". Therefore, they are willing "within the same informal but structured relationship" proposed in measure 1, "to explore with HMG (outside the scope of the Anglo-Irish Agreement) how matters of mutual interest and benefit can be pursued with the appropriate representatives.....of the Republic of Ireland". Moreover, the UUP is "prepared to discuss with others how we can address the void of misunderstanding that presently exists between politicians in Northern Ireland and those in the Republic of Ireland."

Comment: We would of course welcome a greater unionist willingness to examine the scope for worthwhile North-South co-operation (as has been signalled by the UUP in the 1992 talks and in subsequent policy papers). The most obvious place to do so is in Strand 2 of the Talks. It is more than a little strange that the UUP is initially proposing to consult not with the Irish, but with the British Government. It is also the case that the Anglo-Irish Agreement provides the current framework for such co-operation.

It is not clear what the UUP has in mind by stating a willingness to address the "void of misunderstanding" between Northern and Southern politicians. It goes without saying that the Government - and, no doubt, opposition parties - are willing to meet the UUP at any time. Over the past year, and in the Talks since October, it is not we who have refused to engage in dialogue.

On rights issues, the UUP proposes an early academic-led conference "to clarify the issues and assist the parties in the determination of their policies". It is believed that substantial consensus exists on these matters. The UUP's own preference is for the incorporation into UK domestic law of the ECHR, but group issues (for example, drawing from OSCE practice) must also be discussed.

Comment: The UUP's statement of its support for incorporation of the ECHR is welcome, as is its acknowledgement of the need to look at group rights (though we might not regard the OSCE as the most appropriate source). An academic-led conference might be of some value, though it should be noted that Tom Hadden has in the past, for SACHR, led similar seminars for political representatives, and that there is a substantial volume of academic writing on the issue. Again, these issues would at this point be best handled in the Talks framework, as is envisaged.

Conclusion/Press Line

8. - Naturally, we welcome all contributions to political debate
- We see elements of some value in certain of the UUP's proposals, taken individually and on their merits
 - Nevertheless, this is merely a selection of some issues, mostly of concern to the unionist community, which should properly be considered in the round in the Talks process: nationalist representatives, and the two Governments, could no doubt come up with a wide range of other issues of equal or greater interest
 - The overall focus of the paper is tilted in an internalist direction;
 - The timing of the present paper, coming after nine months of Talks which have failed to move on to issues of substance, and just before their adjournment pending the imminent election campaign, will raise doubts in some quarters about the tactical context of this initiative;
 - The UUP's description of the purpose of the Talks, and of the stance of the Irish Government on the question of Sinn Féin's entry to them, is incorrect
 - They appear to reject any prospect of inclusive talks even following an unequivocal and credible ceasefire: in that they are at odds with the two Governments and the majority of the other parties present;
 - Implicitly, they again reject the implementation of the Mitchell report in all its aspects as a basis for decommissioning, without proposing a credible or achievable alternative;
 - It goes without saying that the Government are prepared to meet the UUP leadership at any time to discuss all issues. Nevertheless, we are firmly of the view that dialogue is most likely to be meaningful and productive in a properly structured and comprehensive Talks process.
 - We urge the parties to focus on how the Talks, on their resumption on 2 June, can be reinvigorated and can move forward rapidly into consideration of real issues of the type raised in this paper by the UUP.

Rory Montgomery
4 March 1997