



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/99/27

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.

08:01 '98 TUE 10:59 FAX

4B
6/1/98
PSM: PSMS: PSSG:
Messrs. Murray, Teahon,
Mansergh & Dalton:
Ambassadors London &
Washington: Joint Secretary:
Counsellors A-I

3

25

Secure Fax: 6

6 January 1998

No of pages including this one: 5

To: HQ
To: Secretary Gallagher

From: Belfast
From: Joint Secretary

cc: Mrs. [unclear] [unclear]

Subj: Secretary of State's meetings with parties

1. We have been pressing for a full read-out on the Secretary of State's meetings yesterday. She is due to complete her round this morning with meetings with Sinn Féin and the UUP (who, we understand, were initially unenthusiastic, citing their meeting with her last week and with the Prime Minister yesterday afternoon).
2. Full details have been promised for later today. In the meantime, I attach a copy of a press statement issued by the Secretary of State last night, which, we are told, captures the key points made at yesterday's meetings.
3. According to the oral summary received so far, none of the meetings produced any surprises. There was widespread emphasis on the need for progress in the talks. The meetings with the two Loyalist parties were more constructive than the British side had expected, with the PUP agreeing to reflect on returning to the talks next week. The SDLP underlined the need for rapid progress to be made in the talks, with the two Governments to be "in the driving seat" henceforth. "No problems" were encountered at the meetings with Alliance, the NIWC and Labour. In contrast, the meeting with the DUP was acrimonious, with a sustained tirade against the British Government over security matters, and the meeting with the UKUP also involved "a long lecture" by McCartney on the failings of the talks process.

to SAAP [unclear]
from [unclear] [unclear]
UP [unclear]
received in [unclear]
Security [unclear]
yesterday

Ms McLaughlin

passed on to the Taoiseach

[Signature]

6.1.98

FROM

(MON) 01. 05 '98 21:08/ST. 20:08/NO. 3580102277 P 2/5

4 pages

6/2



**NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service**

5 January 1998

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

I am currently in a series of meetings with the Northern Ireland parties which have not yet been concluded.

The purpose of the meetings is to discuss with the parties their concerns about the general situation and any ideas and proposals they want to put to move the process forward.

Let me made it clear that Dr Paisley in particular focused on security matters and not the talks.

A number of security matters were raised with me. In particular, the events at the Maze Prison. These are important matters and we are treating them very seriously. We have set up the Narey Enquiry to look into both the particular events of recent days and with

06/01 '98 TUE 11:00 FAX

(MON) 01. 05 '98 21:09/ST. 20:08/NO. 3580102277 ? 3/5

FROM

6/3

a broader remit to examine wider policy matters. Policies that have made the Maze different from other prisons and which we as a Labour Government inherited from many previous administrations, Labour and Conservative.

I have heard what the parties have to say, and have encouraged them that they should take any specific allegations to the Enquiry or to the RUC who are conducting the murder investigation. It would be wrong of me to pre-empt the conclusions of either the enquiry or the police investigation by commenting on any particular allegations at the moment. But it is important to stress that the findings of the Narey Enquiry and the examination by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons will be published.

The fear and insecurity that exists in Northern Ireland was raised by every we saw today. I reassured them that I was in full support of the measures the Chief

FROM

6/4

Constable considers necessary in response to the present terrorist threat.

A central theme coming from the discussions today is that it is essential at times of difficulty - of which there could well be more in the next weeks and months - that we all remained focused on our shared objective.

That is to reach agreement in the talks process among the political parties. The talks are central. That is where agreement must be reached and where confidence can be built.

A number of parties - but particularly the PUP - voiced their perception that they are somehow second class participants or have been deliberately left out at times. I accept that sometimes I have not been effective enough at informing people in advance of developments. Participants today have made a number of useful suggestions today to improve how information is got out to the parties and to the people

08:01 '98 TUE 11:01 FAX

(MON) 01. 05' 98 21:09/ST. 20:08/NO. 3580102277 P 5/5

FROM

6/5

of Northern Ireland. These are now being looked at. And both I and the Prime Minister are totally committed to the centrality of the talks process.

But the main theme of today has been the participants determination not to be deflected by people who have no interest other than destroying the talks process.

And I am greatly reassured in my meetings so far that the participants share the objective of reaching agreement through negotiations, and in particular the need to make rapid progress.

We remain on course for that objective and I want and hope that all the participants will stay with us in getting there.

3

cc this + office to file.

PSM: PSMS: PSSG:
Messrs. Murray, Teahon,
Mansergh & Dalton:
Ambassadors London &
Washington: Joint Secretary:
Counsellors A-1

Secure Fax: 12

6 January 1998

No of pages including this one

To: HQ
To: Secretary Gallagher

From: Belfast
From: Joint Secretary

(Handwritten initials)

Subj: Secretary of State's meetings with parties (2)

*Ms. McLaughlin
Passed on to the
Taoiseach
yesterday*

1. Further to my earlier message, the following are some supplementary details on yesterday's meetings together with an initial read-out on today's.
2. The DUP meeting was "heavy going". Paisley made clear at the outset that he had responded to an invitation from the Secretary of State to discuss security matters but wished the meeting to be treated as distinct from all the others planned for the day (i.e., not part of the round with the other parties). McCrea did most of the talking. He dealt at length with the circumstances of the Wright murder, making obscure claims about collusion, about gates and turnstiles being left open and about the next of kin not being informed. He also claimed that the two INLA prisoners involved in the murder had been transferred to the Maze from Maghaberry and that they had previously been found to be in possession of weapons in a bid to murder Wright there. Paisley emphasised the concern of his grass-roots supporters about the deteriorating security situation and also claimed that the recent prisoner releases in the South had a destabilising effect.
3. Alliance (Alderdice) criticised the failure to make progress in the talks before Christmas and felt that consideration should be given to alternative approaches (not specified). On prisoner issues, Alderdice argued that all paramilitary prisoners should be treated as ordinary criminals and that there should be no special privileges. He warned that a dual system involving different regimes for different kinds of prisoners would not succeed.
4. Labour and the NIWC expressed general concern about the recent resumption of violence.

*h
8.1.98*

06/01 '98 TUE 18:47 FAX

2

5. The Loyalist parties focussed almost exclusively on prisoner issues. They criticised the NIO for insufficient progress in this area and called for more Loyalist transfers from Britain to Northern Ireland.
6. Other points relating to the meetings with the Loyalist parties and the SDLP have been previously reported.
7. This morning's meeting with Sinn Féin lasted for an hour. The mood was good, with Sinn Féin underlining their anxiety to press on with the talks. They asked the Secretary of State to impress on the UUP the need for direct engagement with Sinn Féin and the need to recognise "the march of time". They emphasised nationalist fears at the present time about reprisals from the Wright murder. Pointing out that all constituent elements of the CLMC have been involved at some time in the killing of Catholics, they claimed that the RUC have not been forthcoming in relation to evidence available to them of UVF and UDA involvement in such killings.
8. The subsequent meeting with the UUP has been described to me as "rambling". On the political front, the UUP wanted to make early progress in a form of a four-way agreement between the SDLP, the two Governments and themselves on "heads of agreement". They wanted confidence-building measures to be kept within the talks process and, mentioning the recent prisoner releases in our jurisdiction, were critical of announcements of this kind being made outside it. They complained about the current Policing Bill, in particular the proposal to limit PANI's powers. On the Maze controversies, they were generally content with the decision to extend the remit of the review established by the Secretary of State. Finally, they were sharply critical of a decision (reported in today's Belfast Telegraph) that 50 police officers are to be made redundant.