



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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cc of Hume
his meeting

(27)

5/11/93

Report of restricted session of the Anglo-Irish Conference
dealing with political developments.

Belfast, 3 November, 1993

Irish Side

Present were:

The Tanaiste
The Minister for Justice
Mr. Tim Dalton
Mr. Sean O hUiginn

British Side

Secretary of State
Mr. Michael Ancram
Mr. John Chilcot
Mr. Quentin Thomas
Mr. Jonathan Stephens

1. The Secretary of State invited Michael Ancram to give an account of the progress which had been made in his contact with the party Leaders. He made clear the British Government remained fully committed to the three-stranded process. Michael Ancram said that he had had two meetings with each party, except for the UUP. He expected a second meeting with them within the next few days. Rather typically, when the Hume-Adams process had become public, they had not refused to meet him, but had studiously avoided fixing a date. They were now sending a team to discuss various specific issues.
2. In relation to Strand One issues, Ancram said that while differences remained, in particular about the relationship between the Commissioners and the Heads of Department and their respective powers, these differences were not insoluble. The SDLP proposal for External Commissioners remained a major stumbling block. He hoped however there might be ways of providing an answer to this obstacle in Strand Two areas. Ancram said he was rapidly reaching the

point where discussions could not be taken forward in isolation from Strand Two issues. He felt the next stage would have to be one of more explicit negotiations, rather than the exploratory format of his present contacts.

3. On Strand Two issues Ancram felt there was broad agreement about the need for some new North-South institutions. There were however considerable differences about the nature and scope of structures, where their authority might flow from, etc. These did not seem to him insoluble difficulties, but he allowed that he might be under-estimating them. The parties, he felt, would be reluctant to explore issues further if the Governments did not set parameters for the discussions. Strand One issues were locked into Strand Two issues, which of course included the interests of the Republic.
4. Ancram said Strand Three issues had not been touched on in his explorations, except in the most general terms. It was clear however that a number of problems would feature, including the question of Articles 2 and 3, entrenchment of the democratic principle, the framework for self-determination, etc.
5. Ancram felt it was legitimate to say that his exploratory talks indicated possibilities of progress beyond what had been established in the Talks last year. This was the view of officials who had been involved in the Talks on the British side. He felt the ground work was in place for seeking agreement in those two strands. The question was now how this could be taken to the next stage. There was clearly a doubt about the position of Paisley and the DUP. They would be seeing Mr. Major. Their paper had to be treated as confidential, but he could say that in it they accepted that the status quo was not an option. Ancram felt that if the Talks developed seriously in the direction of an

agreed settlement, the DUP would wish to be part of it. If their bluff was called they would seek to find a way back in. The Tanaiste agreed the DUP and UUP might both accept that the status quo was unacceptable, but they could have radically different views of the consequences that flowed from this. He recalled that something of a similar ambiguity or difference of purpose lay under the agreed search for "a new and more broadly based agreement".

6. Ancram said all agreed that any new agreement would in some way affect the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He repeated that issues which last year seemed unbridgeable now seemed ripe for exploration. Mayhew said Molyneaux had nominated three "heavy weights". Empey had announced on radio they would be coming to see Michael Ancram, although the date was not known. The Tanaiste recalled that the Taoiseach and Prime Minister would be meeting in early December, against a background of high public expectation. He raised the query whether this series of bilaterals would provide the Prime Ministers with an adequate basis for their meetings. It was important also to keep a focus on the peace process.
7. Ancram thought that part of the emphasis could be on the need to continue the process of dialogue. It should be moved out of the exploratory stage and into commitment to negotiate. It could be possible, as Mr. Major had said, to pull together the different strands and to give focus and direction to the negotiation in terms of where the areas of agreement might lie. He considered Strand Two had an essential contribution to make in this area, since all parties, including the SDLP, would keep their cards on the table until they had an idea what was likely in Strand Two.
8. Thomas recalled the work of the Liaison Group. He hoped there would be an Irish paper fairly soon.

9. Mayhew said there would be no reliable signal as to what progress might be made in Strand One until the participants knew what the Governments had put forward in relation to Strand Two. The Irish Government needed to clarify its position in that respect and consequently it was a matter of great importance that a paper should be presented. There was fairly wide-spread agreement among the parties that it would serve no useful purpose to get around the table until there was a prospect of agreement.

10. Mayhew said he was unsighted on any recent developments in relation to what might have been discussed in Brussels. The last text he had seen was one which the Prime Minister considered "not saleable". He did not know to what extent this had been changed by the Brussels meeting, but if there were continuing difficulties, the issue might have to be left to one side. If it was possible to speak of anything good from the recent atrocities, it was that they had made it harder for the political leaders to stay away from talks.

11. O hUiginn said that recent developments had shifted the debate decisively to the possibilities of peace. He recalled the point raised by the Tanaiste at the outset, that a Summit which did not address those expectations could be an anti-climax. In the Summit the Governments would be expected to rise to the real needs of the situation.

12. The Tanaiste said that he was aware of the outcome of the Brussels Summit, which was to be followed by further reflection. Mr. Major would also want discussions with various people. He made the point strongly that the British might be under-estimating the interest in the proposal, and the prospects of peace, including from significant Unionist elements, for example the business community. High expectations had been raised. It was necessary for the Governments to respond to those. We needed to be clear

whether the Governments could take on the peace process.

13. Mayhew said if there was a possibility of peace, there was a serious responsibility on the Governments to follow-up by that route. However, there was no point signing up if it was not acceptable to both sides. That would merely shift the problem from one community to the other. It was patent there was no reluctance of principle to follow that route. It was necessary to see if it was saleable. He agreed that events had invested the Talks process with greater importance in the public mind. "The politicians must talk" was the message which he was getting from people right across the board in Northern Ireland.
14. The Tanaiste wondered ironically whether they would one day tell this to the politicians they elected. Mayhew responded with an anecdote about how he had secured a banner headline on the need for talks in the local Ballymena newspaper.
15. Thomas asked whether it remained the intention not to refer publicly to developments in that other dimension. The Tanaiste confirmed this was so. He considered the Governments had done very well to keep their positions steady and supportive at a time when there was a great danger of the opposite happening. Chilcot assented very warmly to this. The way the Governments had hung together had been a considerable asset. Their views were shared, including in relation of hopes of a cessation. He felt the basis for that was still there and had a lot of potential. The principles enunciated by the Tanaiste and in the Brussels Communiqué had also been very valuable. The British Government would want to hurry ahead with the target date of 3rd December in mind. It was important not to let Hume twist in the wind, but it was important also to protect the position of the British Government that they were not taking over any suggestion from Adams. He felt time would

help on that latter dimension.

16. Mayhew said the important thing was not to let the momentum for talks subside. O hUiginn said that the modest and low-key terms of reference which understandably governed the Ancram contacts could also lead to a very modest and indefinite outcome, which would not serve as an adequate or publicly credible basis for a Summit. Mayhew dissented from this analysis and said that he did not see the Summit necessarily as a milestone in relation to the Talks process.

17. The Minister for Justice recalled the enormous coverage which the events relating to the Hume-Adams talks had generated internationally. John Hume was well respected internationally, and any notion that a peace plan by him had been discarded could give rise to much negative reaction. Northern Ireland was a political priority for the Irish Government, but was seen as low on the British agenda. The gravity of the situation meant there was an onus on both Governments to give it a high priority. Failure to do so would be open to great criticism. Mayhew said he agreed with the analysis. The Summit Communiqué indicated the Governments would be working on their own terms. He was however reluctant to subject the process to artificial or unnecessary deadlines.

18. The Irish side again emphasised the likely expectations from the Summit and the need for urgency. Thomas agreed that the last sentence of the Brussels Communiqué relating to the Talks process and the intention of the Governments to establish a framework, would also make the Summit a focus of considerable interest, including in relation to the Talks process. In some further, general exchanges, the British side confirmed that they saw the Talks process and the work

in the Liaison Group as complimentary to, and in no sense a substitute for, the discussion at Prime Ministerial level on a peace process. The Tanaiste indicated a paper would be handed over soon.

19. Chilcot asked how Major could best help Hume in the forthcoming meeting. The Tanaiste said Hume felt very bruised. He had made a tremendous contribution and the Governments should help him. He agreed that it would be a very negative factor if there was a perception either in the Nationalist community or in the United States that Hume's efforts to bring about peace had been spurned. O hUigin suggested that the more the Prime Minister could reassure Hume that a strategy for peace was being pursued the more he was likely to cooperate on the presentational aspects.

20. After some further general comments, essentially recapitulating points made earlier, the meeting concluded.



Sean O hUigin
3 November, 1993