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Dr. Hoyle
Mr. Ramsey
To see H
WPS 5/2/75
WPS (13)

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND A DEPUTATION LED BY MR WEST AND DR PAISLEY HELD AT STORMONT CASTLE AT 6.00 PM ON MONDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 1975

Present: Secretary of State
Mr Orme
Sir Frank Cooper
Mr Gilliland
Mr Jordan
Dr Edmund Marshall, Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State

Mr West
Dr Paisley
Captain Austin Ardill
Rev William Beattie
Mr Eddie Burns
Dr Thomas Carson
Mrs Sheena Conn
Mrs Jean Coulter
Mr William Douglas
Mr Herbie Heslip
Mr Douglas Hutchinson
Professor Kennedy Lindsay
Mr Frank Millar
Mrs Paisley
Mr Charles Poots
Mr Clifford Smyth
Mr Ian Stronge
Mr William Thompson

1. The deputation led by Mr West and Dr Paisley arrived uninvited and unannounced at the steps of Stormont Castle at about 4.00 o'clock in the afternoon and after some negotiation with the Principal Private Secretary handed in a written demand to see the Secretary of State -- copy attached. The Secretary of State reluctantly agreed to see them later that evening.

2. When the meeting commenced, Mr West said that as elected representatives of the majority in Northern Ireland, they had asked for the meeting out of anxiety at the Government's handling of the present situation. They were surprised that as elected representatives they had not been consulted by the Secretary of State since the end of the ceasefire and they wished to discuss, calmly and responsibly, four topics -- the negotiations with the IRA, the SDLP's attitude towards the RUC, the lack of police co-operation with the Army and the withdrawal of firearms.

3. "Negotiations with the IRA"

Mr West said that the Secretary of State had given an assurance at his last meeting that there would be no discussions with Sinn Fein, whom Loyalists equated with the IRA, whilst violence continued. In spite of this assurance, discussions with NIO officials had taken place after the end of the ceasefire. Such discussions gave the IRA credibility and deepened the Loyalists' suspicion that negotiations were taking place. What the deputation thought was an assurance from the Secretary of State that these discussions would be brought to an end.

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4. The Secretary of State stressed that there was no question of negotiation. Such meetings as had taken place had been with the full cognisance and agreement of the security forces and his officials had been instructed merely to explain and to clarify Government policy and no more. Talks were only in the context of a ceasefire and not about the release of detainees or about Northern Ireland's constitutional future. Newspapers were full of rumours and false reports from self-appointed intermediaries but these were mere speculation. He had publicly stated that he would react only to a genuine and sustained cessation of violence and he emphasised several times that he would not sell the Protestant community down the river in any way.

5. Nevertheless, he refused to give the delegation the particular assurance it wanted but said that discussions would continue so long as there was some advantage in a further explanation of Government policy. He intimated that there was some indication of a responsive attitude, although this was marred by the emergence of splinter groups.

6. When Dr Paisley referred to Mr Pitt's statement about the release of detainees at the SDLP's conference, the Secretary of State stressed that his policy on detention had been set out clearly in his statement to the House of Commons on 14 January. Despite protests from Mrs Coulter, he refused to repudiate publicly what Mr Pitt had said.

7. In answer to Dr Paisley, the Secretary of State said that any cessation of violence would have to be seen to be permanent. Before there could be a response from the Government, he would have to be sure that the movement of arms and explosives and the training of recruits had ceased. He went on to say that there was little evidence to show that there had been an IRA build-up during the ceasefire; indeed many of the recent bomb incidents indicated that the bombs had been manufactured by inexperienced people.

8. The SDLP and the RUC

Dr Paisley urged the Secretary of State to call on the SDLP to give their support to the RUC. The irony of the murder of Sergeant Coulter was that he was just returning from checking on the police guard for Austin Currie's house. How could the SDLP be allowed to take part in Government when they did not recognise the police?

9. The Secretary of State said that the Government recognised the importance of proper policing in the Province. An effective police force, acceptable to both Communities, was a prerequisite to a return to normality and he was prepared to say quite bluntly that now was the time for everyone to lend their support to the RUC. He would not, however, meddle in party politics.

10. Army/Police Co-operation

Mr West referred to the recent bomb incident on the M1 Motorway where two police officers had been injured. The Army had been criticised on the police radio frequency by policemen at the scene for refusing to send in a helicopter with searchlights to look for the two policemen injured in the blast. Many members of the general public had heard this and were concerned at the lack of Army co-operation.

11. The Secretary of State said that he had been assured by the Chief Constable at the Morning Security Review that co-operation between the police and the Army was excellent. The incident had obviously been a come-on and it was Army policy not to investigate a bomb scare in the dark. Nevertheless, he would call for a full report and would reply to Mr West in due course -- Action Mr Webster for draft reply.

12. Firearms

Dr Paisley and Mr West strongly criticised the recent police policy of calling in legally-held weapons from people who had held firearms certificates for many years and especially from those in isolated rural areas.

13. The Secretary of State said that the policy on firearms was under review and promised to take the deputation's view into account. He agreed that there was little evidence to show that legally-held weapons were used in acts of violence but said that there was strong arguments against allowing people to hold more than one weapon. Nevertheless, he asked that if the delegation wished to pursue the matter or raise individual cases, they should seek a meeting with Mr Moyle, the Minister responsible -- Mr A R Brown to note.

14. Gardiner Report

In a brief exchange, Mrs Coulter urged the Secretary of State not to delay the implementation of the Gardiner proposals. Dr Paisley, correcting her, said that in fact there were several recommendations in the Gardiner Report that the UUUC would oppose.

15. IRA Funerals

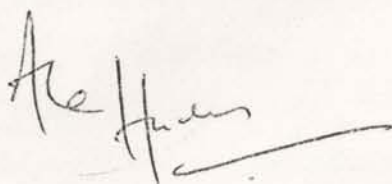
Dr Carson asked the Secretary of State to take action to prevent the IRA funeral taking place at Belleek on Tuesday, 4 February. The Secretary of State promised to pass on his views to the GOC but said that the matter should be left to the discretion of the Commanding Officer on the spot.

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16. Conclusion

Winding up, Mr West said that the Secretary of State had failed to satisfy the delegation that there was a useful purpose in the continuation of talks with Sinn Fein and he called for an end to such meetings. He also urged the Secretary of State to use his influence on the SDLP to change their policy towards the RUC.

The meeting was quiet and responsible throughout and lasted 1½ hours.



A HUCKLE
Private Secretary
4 February 1975

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