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26 JUN 1984
MUFAX ROOM
STORMONT HOUSE ANNEX

- cc PS/SofS (L&B) - M
- PS/Ministers (L&B) - M
- PS/PUS (L&B) - M
- PS/Sir Ewart Bell - M
- Mr Bourn - M
- Mr Brennan
- Mr Angel
- Mr Merifield - M
- Mr Carvill - M
- Mr Doyne Ditmas - M
- Mr Burns
- Mr Abbott
- Mr Lyon
- Mr Reeve - M
- Mr Wood
- Mr Templeton - M
- Mr Bickham

NOTE OF A MEETING WITH DR PAISLEY ON 25 JUNE 1984

The Secretary of State had a meeting on 25 June with Dr Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party. At Dr Paisley's request, the meeting took place at the House of Commons and no officials were present. The Secretary of State told the PUS and myself afterwards what had passed.

2. During the meeting, Dr Paisley had been entirely cordial. He had at first asked the Secretary of State to dismiss the New Ireland Forum Report when it was debated by the House of Commons on 2 July. He had, however, been mollified by SofS's comment that none of the 3 models offered in the Forum Report was a realistic option for the foreseeable future, but that the Report nevertheless had to be taken seriously as a bona fide attempt to come to terms with the difficulties of Northern Ireland.

3. Dr Paisley had commented that he was very ready to discuss political arrangements in Northern Ireland with Mr Howe, and that such discussions would be helped if there were the least possible intrusion by the UK Government. Dr Paisley's reasons for seeing point in such discussion was that he thought people were fed up with the security difficulties and the economic

difficulties, especially unemployment. Dr Paisley therefore thought it important that every effort should be made by Northern Ireland politicians to reach an accommodation among themselves. The Secretary of State had commented that he would be very pleased if such an outcome came about. But the difficulties should not be underestimated.

4. In response to Dr Paisley's request that the Secretary of State should say nothing in the debate on the Forum Report which would make it difficult for the DUP to be flexible, the Secretary of State had explained that the Northern Ireland political parties would have until September to conduct discussions among themselves, because the consultations to be initiated by the UK Government would be no more than exploratory during that period. The Secretary of State had also explained that he would be announcing consultations with the Republic of Ireland, but Dr Paisley had not objected to that. It was not anything in the 1973 Act, so much as the substantive need for the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland which was the real guarantee against any inappropriate settlement with the Government of the Republic. By the same token, articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution of the Republic were described by Dr Paisley as an 'irritant' rather than as a substantive obstacle.

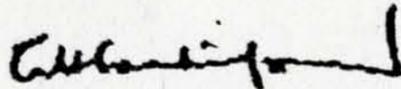
5. The Secretary of State had asked Dr Paisley what he might say in discussion with Mr Hume. Dr Paisley had shown a preference for legislative devolution to the Northern Ireland Assembly rather than for any extension of executive powers. (This appeared to be the converse of the position of the Official Unionists). Dr Paisley had also commented that the SDLP had got too much in the arrangements of 1973/74, and would have to reconcile themselves to taking less on this occasion - as would the other political interests in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State had pressed Dr Paisley to realise that, without significant developments in relation to an Irish dimension, the SDLP could not be expected to join in the Assembly.

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6. The Secretary of State had asked about the progress being made by the Report Committee. According to Dr Paisley, the Official Unionists' representative, Mr Smyth, had not yet been to a meeting of the Committee. Mrs Dunlop, who had attended, had been inconsistent in her contributions.

7. Dr Paisley had made what seemed to the Secretary of State a cogent point on the relationship between a political settlement and the security situation. The Secretary of State had always said that a political settlement was a necessary pre-condition to resolving the security situation. Dr Paisley had pointed out that, even after a political settlement had been reached, there would be a very difficult period during which things might well get worse, before they got better, and strong nerves would be needed to sustain the political equilibrium.

8. Generally, the Secretary of State had been surprised and pleased by Dr Paisley's apparent wish to be conciliatory, although it was of course impossible to know how long this would continue when difficult decisions came into closer prospect.



G K SANDIFORD

25 June 1984

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