

E. R.

AB/1706/BN

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B)
PS/Ministers (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Stephens
Mr Brennan
Mr Chesterton
Mr Innes
Mr Elliott
Mr Spence
Mr Gilliland
Mr Bell
Miss Elliott
Mr Blackwell
Mr S Hewitt
Mr G Hewitt
Mr Ehrman
Mr Mackay

DUP Annual Conference

The DUP Annual Conference, at which members of PAB were not welcome, took place in Belfast on 19 April.

Press reports suggest that Paisley performed well and consolidated his position at the head of the party with Robinson as his lieutenant, that the party's opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement remains as strong as ever, if not stronger, but that there is some ambivalence about support for the RUC.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

The main speech was made by Robinson who identified two alternative solutions to the Agreement - negotiation or confrontation, the latter of which would be 'devastating, terrible and bloody' while the former would aim 'to wipe out the Agreement and to establish for Ulster a system of government which the community could give consent to.' He warned delegates not to expect a return to a pre-1972 Stormont. In a more extravagant contribution Gregory Campbell called for 'even the foundations of Maryfield to be demolished' and the Rev William McCrea urged Libya-type strikes against Dundalk, Drogheda, Crossmaglen and Carrickmore.

Talks with the Prime Minister

Robinson explained that unionist leaders would be considering in the coming weeks whether a framework for negotiation could be agreed between them and the Prime Minister. Paisley amplified a little saying 'There can be no compromise in our stand that negotiations cannot take place until the Anglo-Irish Agreement ceases to be implemented. There can be no negotiations until a proper framework for the same is devised entirely outside the Anglo-Irish Agreement.' Paisley also indicated that whatever proposals were made to the unionist leaders by the Prime Minister would be offered to the unionist people to decide on, but he made it clear that continued direct rule was not an option and that a 'constitutional settlement' was required. There appears to have been no reference to what form that settlement may not take, and in a radio interview on 21 April Paisley deliberately ducked a question about the role the minority might play in any such settlement.

Paisley also said that whilst 'talks about talks' were under consideration the campaign of opposition to the Agreement would not be frozen. On the contrary, an intensification was called for.

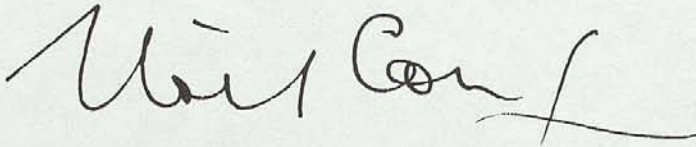
The RUC

Alan Kane's motion calling for support for the RUC becoming conditional on their behaviour and the party's relationship with the RUC being reviewed within six months provoked a lively debate in which the proposer of an amendment condemning attacks on RUC homes was jeered (the culprits later being admonished by Paisley) and some revealing statements made, most notably by Mr Walter Millar (Cookstown) who felt 'The RUC's objective should be the defeat of militant republicanism not to put down the loyalist people'. The Party finally adopted an amendment to the original motion, moved by Paisley, expressing no confidence in the Chief Constable and calling for a review of the Party's relationship with the RUC if they continued to be used to implement the Agreement.

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Conclusion

Paisley's position as leader of the DUP is clearly under no threat, though differences in the Party were more evident this year than at previous conferences, and Paisley probably had to expend more effort than normal to rally the Party behind him. He is clearly aware that any progress that might be made in talks with the Prime Minister must be saleable to his supporters. He will want to avoid a repeat of 25 February. There is no indication at all that a split in the DUP - at any level - is likely to appear.



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Political Affairs Division

21 April 1986