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FROM: D J R HILL  
Talks Secretariat  
2 July 1991

cc PS/Paymaster General (L&B)  
PS/Minister of State (L&B)  
PS/PUS (L&B)  
✓ PS/Mr Fell  
Mr Pilling  
Mr Ledlie  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Alston  
Mr Wood (L&B)  
Mr McNeill  
Mr Cooke  
Mr Dodds  
Mr D A Hill  
Mr Petch  
Mr Archer, RID  
HMA Dublin  
Mr Gowan, Cab Office  
(via SIL)  
Mr Brooker  
Mr Pope

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B)

TALKS: 2 JULY

*9/8*  
*cc Mr N. [unclear] 9/8*

Summary of 1 July

1. In effect we ran up against the implications of the 16 July/timetable problem. The general distinction between the Unionist desire to build up agreed structures from a discussion of specific proposals and the SDLP desire to work downwards from a shared analysis of the problem is being sharpened and distorted by:

- a. the Unionist desire to make rapid progress in the time remaining, while avoiding any interim "agreement"; and
- b. the SDLP concern not to reveal their hand on 'internal' arrangements before knowing that the process is going to continue.

2. The Alliance Party demonstrated growing irritation with the SDLP and placed itself firmly on the Unionist side of the argument.

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3. After a late start, caused by the commemoration ceremony at the City Hall, the Business Committee failed to agree that the way forward should be to seek to draw general principles from the parties' papers of 28 June under the various headings identified in the "common issues and propositions" text of 26 June.

4. The first plenary, which commenced at 2.15pm, saw the timetable issue brought into the open - by Mr Hume - and similarly failed to identify an agreed objective for the day's discussion. A debate on the constitutional position of Northern Ireland was eventually launched with the Unionists, especially Dr Paisley, treating it as item (i) on the schedule to the workplan and the SDLP notably reticent and anxious not to be drawn into a discussion of specific formulae or positions. A predictably tense and edgy debate ensued and produced no real measure of agreement.

5. During the dinner break the Minister of State met the party leaders individually and succeeded in improving the atmosphere:

- i. Mr Hume confirmed that the SDLP would not reveal their ideas on internal structures (which would be modelled on EC institutions) while the timetable issue was unresolved. He was happy to work towards a statement of principles/requirements by the end of this week. He was keen to settle the timetable for the next 10 days so that colleagues could confirm their holiday plans;
- ii. Dr Paisley repeated that he was very keen to avoid anything being "agreed" which would enable the Government to convey the impression that the talks had reached a tidy, if interim, conclusion. He wanted to drive the discussion forward into a debate on the real issues and retains a belief that the SDLP would be willing participants in striking political deals on the detail of Assembly structures. His proposal was that today should be spent in a round of bilaterals in which the parties would tell the Government (orally for security reasons) their proposals for new structures for Northern Ireland, following which the Government would table an amalgamated version, perhaps with options, for consideration. (This

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idea has not been mentioned to the SDLP or Alliance party, though it is similar to ideas canvassed in the Business Committee last week);

- iii. Dr Alderdice was angry and frustrated. He expressed himself forcibly against the idea of a statement of principles and clearly still hopes that the Talks can proceed to address substantive issues over the next 8-9 days.

6. The evening session concentrated on an exploration of the SDLP two identity thesis (complicated by Dr Alderdice's determination to insist that he and the Alliance party represented a 3rd identity). The mood was much better than in the afternoon and a serious discussion was cut short by the clock.

#### The Way Ahead

7. It seems desirable for the Government to settle, in its own mind at least, what it should aim to achieve over the next few days:

- a. the idea of agreeing a statement of principles/propositions/parameters seems unlikely to bear fruit with Unionists in their present mood, though some Ulster Unionists may be less adamant;
- b. there seems no prospect of getting into a substantive discussion with the SDLP on the detail of strand one issues, either in plenary or bilaterals, until the timetable issue is resolved;
- c. we do, however, wish to produce a soft landing (ie which avoids acrimony) and provide participants with an incentive to take up the talks process again when the circumstances are right;
- d. we might also seek to prepare the ground for handling 16 July on the lines sketched out in paragraph 3 of Mr Thomas's submission of 28 June.

Agenda for the Day

8. The parties are expecting to meet in plenary session at 10.30am. The Secretary of State might:
- a. signal his intention to have a discussion with the party leaders at a convenient moment (? after the coffee break). It is relevant that Mr Molyneaux (and Mr Robinson) will not be back in Northern Ireland until late morning at the earliest; and
  - b. invite Dr Mawhinney to summarise where the discussion on identities stands (speaking note at Annex A) as a basis for bringing that debate to a conclusion.
9. Any discussion with the party leaders might seek to resolve the difficulties caused by the timetable issue. It might still be too early to signal how we might handle 16 July (paragraph 4 of Mr Thomas's submission) or to try to assemble Unionist support for a "resumption" package such as the one sketched out in paragraph 6 of Mr Alston's submission of 26 June on the Timetable issue, but the Secretary of State might seek to persuade the Unionist leaders and Dr Alderdice of the logic of proceeding to agree a set of parameters within which subsequent discussion of specific issues should take place. They might also accept the argument that this would provide objective evidence of progress, which is something they presumably wish to demonstrate.

Options

10. In the light of reactions we might be able to resume discussion of the papers of 28 June with the aim of deriving general principles/parameters.
11. There seems little positive advantage in getting private briefing from the Unionist parties on their proposals as that would leave the onus on HMG to take the next step, but it provides a fallback which might keep business going for a while.

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12. Another fallback might be to table some or all of the "Government papers" on finance, EC matters human rights, security issues, options for securing a local input into security policy and (perhaps) options for new institutional arrangements in Northern Ireland. These would provide background information, firm up the indications of "Government constraints" about which all the parties have expressed interest (and thus provide further material for discussion as between the parties and the Government) and might even provide a vehicle for eliciting the parties' views on some of these substantive issues.

Other matters

13. The Secretary of State may also wish to find time to consider:

- a. news from Australia;
- b. Mr Alston's report of last Friday's liaison meeting and his recommendation regarding the release of British Government contributions to last week's exchanges with the parties.

Signed: David Hill

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Talks Secretariat  
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## COMMUNAL IDENTITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Speaking Note for use by the Minister of State

1. At the start of yesterday evening's session we launched an interesting debate on the nature and implications of the communal identities which exist in Northern Ireland.
2. Dr Alderdice reiterated his analysis that there exists in Northern Ireland a "third tradition" which has a politically rather than territorially - based philosophy; and his view that this too need to be accommodated.
3. The SDLP representatives set out once again their analysis of the problems caused by the existence of two major distinct communal identities in Northern Ireland and were, I think, in the process of explaining what criteria might be employed to measure how effectively the Irish Nationalist identity had been accommodated in any new institutions or arrangements which might emerge from these talks.
4. Mr McGimpsey asserted the Irishness of many in the Unionist community.
5. Mr Empey argued that Unionist accepted the "two identities" analysis but found it difficult to see how to assess the prospects for accommodating the Irish nationalist identity without starting from a consideration of specific proposals for new political structures.
6. Dr Paisley interpreted the references in the SDLP paper to "parity of esteem" in a way which suggested that the Irish nationalist identity could only be accommodated by giving the Irish Government an equal role with the British Government in the government of Northern Ireland. I do not think the the SDLP had had a full opportunity to respond to that and explain what they understood by the term "parity of esteem".