

as the Standard **AAA** 16/5

FROM: D J R HILL
TALKS SECRETARIAT
16 MAY 1991



cc. PS/PUS (L&B)	- B
PS/Mr Fell	- B
Mr Pilling (c/o HMA)	- B
Mr Alston	- B
Mr McNeill	- B
Mr Cooke	- B
Mr Dodds	- B
Mr Petch	- B
Mr Pawson (L&B)	- B
Mr Archer	- B
HMA Dublin	- B
Mr Brooker	
Mr Gowan, Cabinet Office	

MR THOMAS - B

TALKS: UNIONIST LEADERS' MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, 15 MAY

It may be helpful for those who were not fully debriefed on yesterday's meeting to have the attached summary of my understanding of the key points. It is a little fuller than the note being circulated to the party leaders which copy recipients will have seen. Additionally I understand that the Prime Minister did at one point say that one "possible outcome" of the Talks could be an alternative to and replacement for the Agreement. The Unionist Leaders might seek to make something of this, though the Prime Minister resisted their attempts to persuade the Government to back their position.

Signed:

D J R HILL
Talks Secretariat
16 May 1991

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POLITICAL TALKS

This note summarises the key points to emerge from the meeting between the Prime Minister, accompanied by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, and the Leaders of the Ulster Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Unionist party on the afternoon of 15 May.

2. The phrase "these talks" in the second paragraph of the paper circulated by the Secretary of State to the Northern Ireland parties on 14 May should be construed as referring to the second and third strands of the Talks, and not to the first strand. [It was accepted that it was wholly appropriate for the Secretary of State to consult the Irish Government about the practical issues concerning strands two and three of the Talks, in which they will be involved]. [The discussion of this point removed a misapprehension which had underlain the statement issued by the Unionist Leaders earlier on 15 May].

3. The Prime Minister confirmed that the appointment of an independent chairman for strand two of the Talks would have no constitutional implications and, in particular, would not convey any implication of international arbitration or adjudication.

4. The Prime Minister restated and reaffirmed the Government's position that Northern Ireland's status as a part of the United Kingdom will not change without the consent of a majority of its people.

[5. The Unionist Leaders referred to the importance they attached to the amendment of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland and draw attention to their statement of 11 May in which they had said that in strand two of the Talks they would seek to persuade the Dublin Government to move quickly on the matter. The Government Side noted the opportunity there would be to raise the amendment of Articles 2 and 3 in strand two of the Talks given the agreement of the participants that it will be open to each party to raise any aspect of the relevant relationships, including constitutional issues].

6. The Unionist Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Talks process launched by the Secretary of State's statement to the House of Commons on 26 March 1991, and their desire to make progress in the discussion of substantive issues. The Government Side drew attention to the safeguard provided by the acceptance on the part of all the parties to the Talks that nothing will be finally agreed in any strand until everything is agreed in the Talks as a whole.

7. The Unionist Leaders said they had serious reservations about the appointment of an independent Chairman and felt unable to give a full and final response until an individual had been appointed by the two Governments, following consultation with the other participating parties. They reserved the right, if they did not approve the choice made, to make their views on the subject clear at the first plenary session of strand two.

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8. They also said it was unsatisfactory that they should be expected to respond to that particular proposition before knowing the powers and duties of any independent Chairman and the "standing orders" he would apply.

9. [The Unionist Leaders accepted that the bulk of the substantive changes in strand two should take place in Northern Ireland, but] [As regards the precise location for the bulk of the substantive exchanges in strand two, the Unionist Leaders] felt unable to give a full and final response until the location had been determined.

10. Subject to these reservations, the Unionist Leaders said they were prepared to participate in the Talks process on the basis of the 26th March statement as elaborated in respect of the practical arrangements for strands two and three by the paper circulated by the Secretary of State on 14 May. In particular, they hoped it would be possible to hold an initial plenary session of the first strand of the Talks at 10.30 am on Monday 20 May.

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