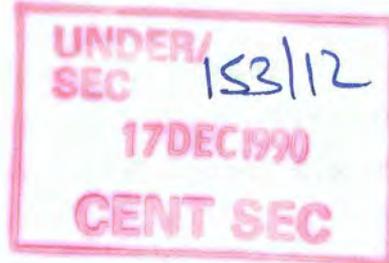


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FROM: D G McNEILL, PAB  
DATE: 17 DECEMBER 1990

PS/Secretary of State (B&amp;L) - B

PAB(5) 1990POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND SEPTEMBER 1990 TO DECEMBER 1990General

1. This is the latest sweep analysis by PAB of political developments in Northern Ireland since the second week of September until early December. The early part of the period saw the Secretary of State in further discussion with the main constitutional parties following the relaunch of the political talks process. At the same time the Secretary of State continued to try to find ways, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of Ireland, for the remaining areas of disagreement between the parties to be resolved satisfactorily. Having assessed the position after these exchanges the Secretary of State gave his up to date analysis of the situation and options for moving it forward to the Republic's Foreign Affairs Minister at the IGC on 25 October. The response from Dublin was given at a helpful and constructive IGC on 30 November. However with little substantive comment being offered in public the main parties have continued to restate their earlier positions in general terms at each of their annual conferences which have occurred in the period. There have however been some positive indications from the various parties that there may be room for manoeuvre and hence possible progress though there is still a continuing series of conflicting public signals from the participants.

2. On the security front an upsurge in terrorist activity, tit for tat murders and associated incidents has resulted in nearly thirty people being killed and several more injured across the province. Away from the political and security scene the period has seen a new

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President elected in the ROI and Dr Cahal Daly appointed as Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland. Included as an Annex is a diary of events for the first six months of this year.

Unionists

3. On 5 October the Secretary of State met the Unionist leaders at Stormont as part of his "stocktaking" exercise following the relaunch of the process in early September. Both leaders publicly presented the meeting as the "first step" in the second phase. Mr Molyneaux stated that it was difficult to be optimistic but "the shutters had not come down". Second tier unionist opinion had been aptly summed up by Chris McGimpsey, Honorary Secretary of the UUP, when some days in advance of the Unionist leaders meeting with Mr Brooke he had called for "the removal of Articles 2 and 3 from the Republic's Constitution" and "reactivation in the north of the border poll". He continued saying that Unionists "accepted nationalist aspirations to unity by consent" but he concluded "we must be afforded the right to say no as well as yes".

4. More generally Unionists continued to believe that they held the moral high ground having reached an understanding with Mr Brooke on their preconditions whilst stating their commitment to move forward with the political process as defined in the statement to Parliament which was to have been made on 5 July. Their position that "significant progress" must be achieved in the internal talks before any further strands could be embarked upon was outlined on numerous occasions by leading unionists. This was also coupled with statements that they would not enter into any formal arrangements with the Republic (as part of a devolved administration) so long as Articles 2 and 3 remained in force. However they continued to state that this latter position was not a pre-condition to entering discussions with the Dublin Government as and when progress has been made in the internal strand.

5. David Trimble, UUP MP for Upper Bann, echoed this policy when commenting on views expressed by Seamus Mallon who said that "unionists were erecting roadblocks to negotiations which were totally unacceptable". Trimble in reply stated that there was "no

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question of unionists modifying their position." There was further unionist anger at Mr Mallon when the Deputy SDLP leader told a fringe meeting at Labour Conference in Blackpool in early October that the Secretary of State should "tear up the documents he had produced in July" for the talks initiative. (It was following this that copies of a subsequent speech to be given by the Secretary of State before the Recess and the SDLP views on it appeared in full in the Irish Times in an article by columnist Frank Millar.) The Mallon comments at Blackpool (subsequently endorsed by his leader John Hume) drew a predictable response from James Molyneaux who said that "the Blackpool bombshell indicates that the SDLP are not remotely interested in restoring democracy to Northern Ireland." A few days later David Trimble again opened up on the SDLP comments saying that "Mallon's goal is a federal Ireland and therefore there is little hope of finding a formula for interparty talks." The remainder of October brought the occasional bout of political jousting between the two main parties whilst each awaited developments following the Intergovernmental Conference in Dublin on 25 October.

UUP Conference

6. Also the Ulster Unionist Party held its annual conference in Newcastle on 27 October. The theme was "British - we shall stay." There were seven main motions for debate. The main themes running through these were:- the removal of Articles 2 and 3 as a fundamental requirement; reaffirming opposition to the Agreement; and restoration of local democracy in some shape or form. Some details of the party's proposal for a fundamental reappraisal of its structure and organisation were also outlined. The motion on Constitutional Affairs was, not surprisingly, the key debate. It called for continued opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and a "determination to enter into no arrangement with any Dublin Government until Articles 2 and 3 are deleted." The seconder was Dr Christopher McGimpsey, Executive member and one of the brothers who fought the constitutional validity of the Agreement in the Dublin Supreme Court this year. He claimed that Articles 2 and 3 were a major source of instability and a barrier to the development of any sort of normal relationship. They also provided

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Justification for and impetus to the IRA campaign of terror. Other speakers included David Trimble, who called on Mrs Thatcher to repudiate "this unjust territorial claim and Reg Empey, former Lord Mayor of Belfast who suggested that the SDLP and Dublin view was that the Agreement suited them fine and that was an acceptable basis for governing Northern Ireland for the present. Some suggested that new (but unspecified) measures should be taken to oppose the Agreement, if the talks process failed. Jim Nicholson, UUP Chairman, had also referred to Articles 2 and 3 in his speech as "outdated and offensive nationalism". He said "the days of giving and receiving nothing in return have gone. We want to be treated similarly to other citizens of the UK - nothing more, nothing less."

7. Mr Molyneaux's speech followed the constitutional debate. His address had four main themes; a tribute to the Secretary of State for his endeavours in the current political process (something that would have been unheard of from a UUP leader at previous unionist conferences); the use of the phrase "totality of relationships" to attempt to move the debate beyond the narrow focus of the Agreement, although Northern Ireland in this context was firmly viewed as an integral part of the UK; that both he and Dr Paisley stood by all the statements and positions reached up to 5 July and that the removal of Articles 2 and 3 should be a prerequisite to progress. He also hinted that this issue may have to be tackled in other forums if the Irish were unwilling to offer change themselves.

8. Molyneaux's speech, given the pattern of events of the summer, could have been much more hard hitting but instead it was noticeable to see him offering the hope of better relationships between the UK and the Republic rather than "forever regarding each other as incompatible foreigners". The Conference was somewhat of a boost for the leader. It showed clearly that the party was fully behind him and equally that he was in control. He emphasised that he did not want to bring the shutters down on the current process, though in his view it was causing instability and uncertainty.

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DUP Conference

9. At the DUP Conference in late November Dr Paisley spoke in strong and emotive terms. However he did place on public record very clearly that the Unionist leaders would talk to the Dublin Government. He said that HMG "has got" to enter into negotiations with the Republic of Ireland and that the Unionists would be a part of the UK negotiating team. On one of the major stumbling blocks in the current process - that of deciding when to move from the internal talks strand to the north-south dimension and whether "substantial progress" should be seen to have been made in the former to justify the commencement of the latter - Dr Paisley appeared to be reflecting on some room for manoeuvre signalled earlier that week by the SDLP leader John Hume. The DUP leader appeared to choose his words carefully when saying the unionist leaders and others would be able to decide whether substantial progress and agreement "has been achieved."

Anglo-Irish Agreement Anniversary

10. Away from the main political process unionists also marked the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in early November. In this context the tactics used to mark the anniversary showed a difference between UUP and DUP thinking. The UUP chose to hold an "evening seminar" for senior party members to plot the way forward but in addition decided to establish contacts in the UN in New York in order to raise the Republic's constitutional claim over NI. Secondly David Trimble MP went to lobby the Conference on security and co-operation in Europe (CSCE) later in November. The UUP therefore stayed clear of street demonstrations (not surprising following the failure of Rev Martin Smyth's "Hands across the Province" demonstration last year). The DUP did not involve themselves in any of these efforts, preferring on this occasion to keep a fairly low public profile.

Nationalists

11. The Secretary of State met an SDLP delegation in London on 28 September. It was the first meeting between them since the political process was adjourned for the summer and, like the Unionists a few days later, it gave both sides an opportunity to

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present their views on how the remaining obstacles might be overcome as well as confirming that their pre-summer positions had not altered significantly. Following the meeting John Hume told reporters that "talks should not concentrate exclusively on devolution." Around the same time the Taoiseach speaking in New York expressed "reasonable optimism" about the "initiative".

12. A few days later came Deputy leader Seamus Mallon's comments at the annual Labour Party Conference in Blackpool. At the same venue he went on to say that there were no such things as the "internal affairs" of Northern Ireland. These comments in turn prompted Mr Brooke to say that "it is too early to write off this initiative". However Unionists saw the Mallon comments as a political bomb shell and were not pleased by the subsequent approval of them by John Hume in a Radio Ulster interview on 7 October when he suggested that Mr Brooke "should abandon his initiative in its current form". He continued by saying that devolution "had already failed twice" and therefore any talks "would not be about establishing a devolved government but about replacing the Anglo Irish Agreement."

13. Speaking at the annual Wolfe Tone commemoration at Bodenstown, Co Kildare the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey said his government strongly supported the efforts of Mr Brooke but it would have to be involved in discussions about any arrangement which would transcend the Agreement.

14. Apart from the above and comments by party representatives on the security front, the Party in the latter days of October and early November kept a fairly low political profile. Like the unionists having had a preliminary post summer discussion with the Secretary of State they were to some extent adopting a strategy of "wait and see". The absence of any concrete sign one way or the other from Dublin up to the end of November did not cause them too much concern.

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SDLP Conference

15. The SDLP held their annual conference in Londonderry over the weekend of 17/18 November. The main business of the conference took place on the Saturday afternoon with the Party Leader's address followed shortly afterwards by the debate on political affairs. John Hume's 60 minute address, set against the backdrop of a post war Europe and built on various strands ranging from the intellectual debate surrounding republican violence to a restating of his commitment to strive for peace and respect amongst both sections of the community was well received. His lengthy and detailed speech undoubtedly reinforced the position of Hume as party leader and successfully enhanced the party's aim of retaining the moral and political high ground at least in nationalist circles. His challenge to Sinn Fein and the IRA was made from a position of strength, with the party building on increased electoral support from the nationalist community at the expense of Sinn Fein. His speech however took fewer risks in terms of political development, preferring in the main to restate party policies and remind others of their willingness to put forward proposals and continue to act as a facilitator in the current initiative.

17. The political debate which followed provided an interesting assessment of party opinion in terms of the overall strategy towards the talks process. All speakers, for example regarded the Agreement as something not to be damaged. However there were some delegates, and senior figures amongst them, who clearly felt that the party was or at least perceived as too negative and over cautious. Some who held this view genuinely seemed to want a more positive approach, others were more concerned about the SDLP taking the blame for any collapse of the initiative. In any event the SDLP leader some days after the Conference signalled some room for manoeuvre in terms of wishing to find a way around the "substantial progress" impasse. This in turn was picked up by Dr Paisley at the DUP conference the following weekend.

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ROI View

18. On 26 November, prior to the IGC later that week, the Taoiseach and the Secretary of State met to formally open the Ballinamore/Ballyconnell canal project, linking the waterways of the Erne and the Shannon. The Taoiseach used the opportunity to give some upbeat comments about the Irish Government's assessment of the Brooke process which in turn left the Secretary of State responding to the media in similar terms even though the official view from Dublin had not yet been formally presented at the IGC. In the event the 30 November Conference meeting saw Mr Collins indicate some flexibilities in finding a way to overcome the impasse.

Other Events

19. Following the counting of votes after the presidential election in the Republic on 7 November the candidate sponsored by the Irish Labour Party, Mary Robinson was elected as the new President to succeed Dr Patrick Hillery. The Fianna Fail candidate and former Deputy Prime Minister Brian Lenihan, despite being the long running favourite and attracting a political sympathy vote following his removal from the Government a few days before the election, failed to secure a sufficient percentage of the first preference votes and subsequently was overhauled by Mrs Robinson who obtained a substantial number of Austin Currie's second preference votes. She had started the contest as very much the outside choice. In speaking afterwards at a victory rally Mrs Robinson, a highly accomplished lawyer, proclaimed her wish to join hands across the border and visit the people of Northern Ireland on a "mission for peace". However her freedom of action is considerably circumscribed by the Irish Constitution and there is a limit to what she can do without Government approval.

20. In the same week the Bishop of Down and Connor Dr Cahal Daly was appointed as Archbishop elect of Armagh in succession to the Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich who had died earlier in the year. At 73 he is one of the oldest Archbishops in the Catholic Church worldwide. His appointment drew universal acclamation from all parts of Ireland and from Protestant Church leaders in the north. He is unequivocal in his condemnation of the IRA and other violent organisations.

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Security incidents

21. Beginning with the death of Constable Louis Robinson on 15 September, who was abducted on the main road south of Newry on his way home from a fishing holiday in the Republic nearly thirty more deaths had occurred by the early days of November. In statistical terms alone this figure represented almost one third of the total number of deaths since the beginning of 1990 and drew much political comment as each new incident was reported. Amongst a catalogue of tit-for-tat murders, joyriders shot by the Army, and the murders of UDR, RUC and Army personnel, a ruthless attack mounted by PIRA came on 24 October when both the permanent vehicle check points outside Londonderry and Newry were attacked by proxy bomb. Seven people died, 5 of them soldiers.

22. In those attacks PIRA used Catholic men, who worked for the security forces, to drive van bombs to their destinations whilst the driver in at least one case was tied to the vehicle. The checkpoint bombings drew considerable political condemnation from all sides in the Province and further afield. These killings and the shooting dead of four people (two of them members of the security forces) close to the shores of Lough Neagh in early November led to several Unionist and Alliance spokesmen calling for the Government to take whatever steps it deemed necessary to restore community confidence in security matters. Unionists in particular called for the re-introduction of selective internment. These calls were echoed by the Northern Ireland Police Federation but responded to by both the Secretary of State and the Minister of State who reiterated the Government's commitment to defeat terrorism whilst pointing out that internment powers remained on the statute.

Remembrance Day - Belfast

23. On 5 November Belfast City Council voted 19-17 in favour of not permitting the Secretary of State to join the Remembrance Day service at the Belfast Cenotaph. The decision to snub Mr Brooke was bitterly attacked by many Ulster Unionist members within the Council, local politicians and beyond, many of whom had believed that an invitation to the Secretary of State, an ex-serviceman himself, should not hold any "political" significance in terms of the broader Unionist boycott policy. Whilst the initial vote in the

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chamber was taken as 18-18 a subsequent recorded vote led to the two vote winning margin with DUP councillors applying pressure on certain Ulster unionist individuals to ensure the motion was upheld. The Secretary of State, having also received an invitation from the Mayor of Derry to attend their service in the Diamond, travelled to the north west and took part in that service.

24. The Secretary of State told businessmen in East Belfast on 16 October that the IRA was a "parasitic" organisation, dependent on racketeering, which he contrasted with the economic initiatives of government. In a further major set piece address on 9 November in London the Secretary of State stated inter alia, that HMG had no longer any strategic or economic interest in the Province but was there to "help, enable and encourage". The address was referred to by John Hume as the "most outstanding speech ever made by a British Secretary of State". Similiar sentiments were expressed by ROI Government spokesmen. Bishop Cahal Daly categorised it as being of "historic importance" saying it would be of immense assistance to those in the business of persuading republican supporters that violence was futile and counter productive.

Comment

25. The relaunch of Mr Brooke's initiative has seen less public activity between the participants but some "behind the scenes" dealings by parties and between both governments in an attempt to overcome the impasse. Publicly the impression remains that whilst it may yet be possible to get the parties into talks the likelihood of substantial success being achieved after that is uncertain. The next month is likely to be critical. If the current process has to be abandoned it will be important to try to ensure that this can be done without recrimination. On a positive note though it may be that the room for manoeuvre seen recently can lead to a breakthrough in early 1991.

[Signed T Watson for]

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cc PS/Ministers (L&B) - B  
PS/PUS (L&B) - B  
PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B  
Mr Ledlie - B  
Mr Pilling - B  
Mr Q Thomas - B  
Mr A Wilson - B  
Mr Alston - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Chesterton - B  
Mr Hamilton ~~MB~~ MB 17/12  
Mr Wood - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Petch - B  
Mr D A Hill - B  
Mr Coston  
Mr Cooke - B  
Mr D J R Hill - B  
Mr McClelland - B  
Mr Dodds - B  
Mr T Wood MP c/o PO  
NIO(L) - B  
Mr George RID FCO - MUFAX  
Dr C Sperling, Research Dept  
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Embassy, Washington  
British Embassy Dublin  
Mr J Harrison CIVAD HQNI

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DIARY OF EVENTS 1990

4 January

Following the unionist unveiling of plans to review council services in Belfast Dr Joe Hendron (SDLP) said that Unionists were incapable of democratic decision making. He continued by saying that Belfast City Council should be scrapped.

Former Lord Mayor of Belfast John Carson (Unionist) urged John Hume SDLP to back the suspension of the Anglo-Irish Agreement thus allowing constitutional parties to hold talks. This was rejected by the SDLP.

8 January

Peter Robinson rejected a renewed call from the Taoiseach for Unionists to visit Dublin - He said that devolution in NI needed to be established before it would be practical for them to hold talks with the Republic.

9 January

Secretary of State gave a speech in Bangor "nudging" parties towards talks. Taoiseach issued a positive response to them.

January

John Hume reacted to Brooke speech and said SDLP had made clear their willingness to talk at anytime. Peter Robinson said speech was a helpful and strong address in support of devolution.

12 January

Alban Maginnis SDLP Chairman claimed that an increase in local Government functions would be a reward and encouragement to the most die hard and bigoted political elements in Unionism.

13 January

Attempted plot to murder Ken Maginnis MP revealed by RUC.

16 January

Seamus Mallon met the Secretary of State about the regeneration of Newry and Armagh.

Ken Maginnis and David Trimble met with the Secretary of State to discuss security issues.

18 January

3 armed robbers shot by army undercover team at West Belfast Bookmakers.

20 January

Secretary of State visits US.

22 January

Unionist representatives release exclusive to Dublin Newspaper about wanting to talk to Dublin as a means of transcending current Agreement. Taoiseach issued a positive response to them.

joined the Conservative Party having been a former GUP member of the Borough.

- January
- Bloody Sunday commemoration in Derry was marred by PIRA explosion which killed a 12 year old boy on Derry's Walls.
- 2 Feb
- The Northern Consensus Group issued its latest booklet entitled Northern Ireland untying the knot - An agenda for the Ninties.
- 4 Feb
- Sinn Fein held its annual conference at the weekend. Secretary of State had a meeting with Irish Minister Gerry Collins in Limerick.
- 6 Feb
- Following the posting of RUC security documents on walls in West Belfast, SDLP councillor Brian Feeney described the UDR as the "fall guy" in the leaks furore.
- 7 Feb
- Rev Professor Finlay Holmes was elected as Presybterian Moderator.
- 8 Feb
- Workers Party welcomed the positive indication of a willingness to compromise by Secretary of State Mr Brooke when the latter spoke on the subject of Unionist preconditions to talks.
- 11 Feb
- Harold McCusker died in hospital after a long fight against cancer.
- 13 Feb
- Lisburn Councillor Billy Bleakes joined the Conservative Party having been a former UUP Mayor of the Borough.

Feb

Unionist leaders Paisley and Molyneaux met Secretary of State at Stormont Castle to discuss political developments.

Panorama programme provokes new controversy over role of UDR.

Secretary of State met SDLP leader John Hume, Eddie McGrady, Seamus Mallon and Joe Hendron to talk about political development.

22 Feb

Irish Foreign Affairs Minister Gerry Collins met with Secretary of State in London.

24 Feb

Three more Conservative Associations in NI were accepted for affiliation to the Main Party:- Belfast South, East Antrim and Strangford.

26 Feb

The Anglo Irish parliamentary body met for the first time in London.

2 March

The McGimpsey brothers lost their fight in the Dublin Supreme Court to get have the Anglo-Irish Agreement judged as unconstitutional.

Dr Joe Hendron was nominated to stand against Gerry Adams in West Belfat as the SDLP candidate.

March

The Conservatives said that the poll tax should be introduced to Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

30 March

A by-election in Cookstown council saw: Francis Rocks, SDLP win the vacant seat.

3 April

Despite an overwhelming vote against, the Ulster Unionist Lord Mayor of Belfast decided to proceed with his attendance at the Institute of Directors conference in Belfast which was being addressed by Charles Haughey.

11 April

Alliance Party annual conference was held in Belfast.

11 April

DUP and UUP members protested about the Taoiseach Charles Haughey addressing the IOD conference.

20 April

AIIC met in London to discuss political development in the north.

9 May

Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich RC Primate of All-Ireland died in Lourdes.

11 May

Unionist leaders met Secretary of State in London for further political development talks.

15 May

Burial of Cardinal O'Fiaich in Armagh. Sinn Fein members Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness in attendance.

18 May

David Trimble won Upper Bann by-election for Ulster Unionists with a 14,000 majority.

22 May

Another meeting between Unionist leaders and the Secretary of State took place in London.

24 May

SDLP Group met with Secretary of State.

28 May

Secretary of State met Taoiseach in Dublin.

12 June

Secretary of State and Gerry Collins, Irish Foreign Minister met in London.

19 June

Dr Paisley said that he was confident that A/I Secretariat would cease operating to allow talks to go ahead.

The SDLP has said it would not favour the A/I Secretariat being suspended.

25 June

Church of Ireland decided to ordain women as Ministers.

27 June

Secretary of State met Gerry Collins in Dublin.

28 June

SDLP met Gerry Collins in Dublin today to discuss the previous days talks with Secretary of State.