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FROM: ROBERT CRAWFORD
POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION
24 JUNE 1997

INT 29/97

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - O
- PS/Mr Murphy (DFP,B&L) - O
- PS/Mr Ingram (DED,B&L) -O
- PS/Mr Worthington (DENI,DHSS&L) - O
- PS/Lord Dubs (DANI,DOE&L) - O
- PS/Sir David Fell - O
- Mr Thomas - O
- Mr Steele - O
- Mr Leach - O
- Mr Bell - O
- Mr Watkins - O
- Mr Stephens - O
- Mr Wood (B&L) - O
- Mr Beeton - O
- Mr Brooker - O
- Mr Hill - O
- Mr Lavery - O
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Perry - O
- Mr Priestly
- Mr Bharucha - O
- Mr Mapstone - O
- Mr Whysall - O
- Mr Sanderson, Cab Off (via IPL) - O
- Mr Dickinson, TAU - O
- Mr Lamont, RID (via IPL) - O
- HMA Dublin (via IPL) - O
- Miss C Byrne, TPU, HO (via IPL) - O
- Mr N Warner - O
- Ms Healy - O
- Messrs Cary, Reid & Poston (via IPL) - O
- Mrs McNally - O

1. cc in ~~Handwritten~~
 in ~~Carbon~~
 2. in ~~Handwritten~~
Handwritten signatures and initials

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS: MONDAY 23 JUNE 1997

Meeting with the Alliance Party

The Alliance Party met the British Government Talks delegations on the morning of Tuesday 23 June.

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2. The Minister welcomed the Alliance delegation and informed them that the Prime Minister would be making a statement on Northern Ireland on Wednesday. He did not know that the statement would say, but it would make clear that the Government had given every reasonable opportunity to Sinn Fein; the PM's visit to the USA had ensured that Clinton now knew exactly what HMG's position was.

3. Lord Alderdice was grateful for the information. He said that he had recently met Bertie Ahern and Ray Burke. Martin Mansergh had also been present. They had been quite positive and wanted to make progress. They had quite a degree of scepticism regarding the Republican Movement. Alderdice thought that Burke's job in the Irish Government would be to see that Ahern didn't do anything unreasonably moderate. He described Burke as a big, friendly, back-slapping character, who was however, hard as nails underneath this hearty personality.

4. Lord Alderdice said that Alliance had tried for some years to engage with Sinn Fein to determine their intent. Alliance was now very solidly of the opinion that there would be no general engagement from the Republican Movement regarding an honourable compromise. Alderdice had told Ahern this, Alliance were, nevertheless, prepared to make it work, but didn't think the Republican Movement could make a commitment to the process. The Movement were not democratic politicians and would use whatever means they require to achieve their ends. Alderdice had not been surprised by the two recent murders, and described these as conforming to a pattern - every time it seemed that SF were about to come into Talks, the IRA did something to prevent this. If SF did come in, they would immediately seek to renegotiate the rules of procedure, especially the rule regarding sufficient consensus. SF will not be able to accept this.

5. Responding to the Minister's question regarding a further ceasefire, Alderdice said that the previous ceasefire had come about because a particular prospectus had been sold to SF. SF had believed that they, the SDLP, the Irish Government and Irish America would combine in the Talks to shove HMG towards joint authority. The

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ceasefire had however failed to deliver this and the longer it went on, the clearer it had been to SF that this was not going to happen. In particular it had become clear to SF that democratic politics would not deliver the next step into a United Ireland, but might instead have the undesirable effect of stabilising NI.

6. Alliance had taken the view that they nevertheless had to try to make the process work, particularly because Hume and the Irish had been committed to it,. They had gone along with every "one last chance" given to SF, knowing as had grass roots opinion, that it was never the last chance. He agreed with Mr Hill's comment that Unionists had also been mesmerised by the issue of Sinn Fein's entry. This had worked to prevent any move to substantive discussion of the three strands. Seamus Close added that the whole peace process was based on the principle that while there had been a permanent end to violence, then SF and the Loyalist parties could join in the negotiations - but there had never been a permanent end to the violence. The equivocation and fancy language had continued to be used to create a false confidence that the process could move on. Tactical use of the armed struggle (TUAS) had been the approach used by both sides throughout.

7. Democratic politics had been contaminated by the "one last chance approach". SF had again and again been given a leg up into respectable politics, whenever this was needed after IRA attacks, for example, after Enniskillen when there seemed no prospect of Republican movement returning to such respectability. The Presbyterian Moderator had spoken for many at the funeral of RUC Constable David Johnston, saying it was time to think about ordinary decent people who had never thrown a stone in their lives, never mind fired a shot. Over the last year, the democratic political process had been circumvented to focus on peripheral matters; this had been necessary to avoid the further contamination of SF entry when they had been unable to give sufficient commitment. Logic also applied to Loyalists; over the last couple of weeks, there have been two car bombs, violence in prisons, threats against Prison Officers and one RUC Officer kicked to death. The Loyalists were however kept in because it was thought that if they were excluded this would lead to further violence. In reality there were no ceasefires. The Government had to grasp this and end the present equivocation.

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8. Mr Murphy commented that that was an argument for exclusive talks process. He wondered how Alliance would respond to the Nationalist view that the peace process without Sinn Fein would not be complete. Alderdice responded that people had been sold the deceit that it was possible to achieve a solution that everyone would agree to. There was in reality no chance of this. All that had been achieved over the last five years was the building up of support for Sinn Fein. Seamus Close added that combining violence and democracy doesn't work. The Minister pointed out that any final solution would have to secure the overall confidence of the Nationalist and Unionist communities. Lord Alderdice responded that this had not been required in respect of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which it never had such support in the NI community. SF and all Unionists had been against it, Alliance had accepted it, but had not been in favour. The message of the whole peace process was rather that what works is planting bombs. In response to Mr Hill's comment that a possible outcome of the Talks was replacement for the AI Agreement, Alderdice asked what this meant, other than diplomatic words. This meant different things to the UUP and the SDLP and there was no desire for either side to converge. The UUP were looking for an Agreement that would be less distasteful to Unionists while the SDLP wanted the Agreement to be strengthened. Alderdice did not see any scope for relevant trade-offs in achieving convergence. He added that when John Hume had found that he would have to give something in the Talks, and the AI Agreement was likely to be the minimum, he had gone off and engaged the Republican movement - who were not going to give up violence.

9. The Minister replied that one of the objectives of the talks is to bring an end to violence. Part of achieving that would be to wipe out support for such violence, eg in the United States. The PM's statement on Wednesday might elaborate on this - SF had effectively rejected the aide memoire and US and Irish opinion had turned against SF as a result. Alderdice responded that every time this was said, the violence continued. Every time the terms were set out clearly, the Republican movement knew just how far it had pushed HMG. It could then re-draw the bottom line and come back, after more violence, asking for further concessions. Alderdice confirmed that he was not arguing

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for total disengagement from SF and the Loyalists. He said that at the moment, the only people getting real attention were the "messers" even in the Republic of Ireland. He had recently met two TD's, one Fianna Fail and one Fianna Gael, who had been upstaged by SF in Cavan, because Adams had appeared to support the SF candidate. He said it was obvious to all in NI that only law breaking and blocking roads attracted interest and visits by the NIO. Alderdice said if he had been running a residents group he would have had a better chance of seeing the Secretary of State over the last two or three weeks. The line should instead be that SF had been given a fair chance, they had not taken it, but it remained open to them to catch up later.

10. Over the last five years nothing had happened without Sinn Fein's inclusion. Alderdice had found out in 1991/92 that papers were being given to SF by the Government. It was now apparent that the real set of talks were about what SF would need to come into the process, for SF these discussions were all about ratchetting things forward. Seamus Close added that if Alliance had based itself in a position to be thrown out, as had the Loyalists, the same effort would not have been made to keep Alliance in. Everything had been done to keep trouble-makers in and this needed to be changed by the Governments. After two murders, the Government should simply have said that that was enough, with no further opportunity on offer. It was not enough to respond to acts of violence by saying that the Government was examining the position very carefully. The Minister responded by emphasising the PM's own personal horror and disgust at the murders; this had certainly been made clear in his public statement.

11. On decommissioning specifically, Alderdice said that the Alliance view was as before. There was no likelihood of agreement on decommissioning unless Trimble changed his view. Hume was prepared to sacrifice the SDLP either for his own place in history or for the greater nationalist cause. The Government therefore had to think of alternatives. The body politic in NI was very weak and debilitated, and the two Governments needed to find some way of building it up again. Mr Lavery queried whether Alderdice was suggesting that the two Governments should design a solution, consult the parties about it and hold a referendum. Alderdice said that he would certainly stop short of a referendum as a referendum should only be held when its

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outcome was certain. In 1992, it would have been possible to engage the Unionists, but the SDLP, especially John Hume, had pulled the carpet from under everyone's feet. He was not sure whether it would be possible to engage both the SDLP and UUP.

12. Mr Hill summarised the detail of the decommissioning paper for the Alliance delegation, emphasising that there were no surprises and suggesting that it was built on the work of the trilateral group. He explained the committee arrangements and the mechanism for reference of issues to the Strands as appropriate. The paper had been drafted in the expectation that SF would be involved; it required real commitments by the participants to progress and to decommissioning. There would be regular reviews to monitor progress on both. The Alliance representatives indicated that they expected to have no problem with the paper, although they would have of course wanted to study the detail. Alderdice added that handling would be important, if the Government invited amendments this could stall the whole process. Mr Hill explained that paper would be presented as the best judgement of both Governments. The Governments were keen to have it agreed before any recess over the Summer. Seamus Close added that the two Governments should take a very strong line against violence, particularly so if it was intended that those who were abusing the process and equivocating regarding violence were still to be a part of the process. On timing, Alderdice said that he would be keen to have something on Wednesday; it was important not to create the impression that the talks were floundering - a paper was expected on Tuesday and there would be speculation if it were not produced.

13. In conclusion, Eileen Bell (Alliance Chairman), summed up the Alliance view that there were many people in both communities, including many community groups and leaders that what worked was violence. The Government needed to address this perception seriously.

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Meeting with the UDP

14. The Minister explained that the Prime Minister would be making a statement on Wednesday afternoon regarding Sinn Fein's entry to Talks and the recent murders etc. He said the PM would be very strong in condemning the murders and the statement would reflect the perception that SF were stepping up violence in response to very reasonable attempts to get them on the settlement train. The Minister advised that the decommissioning paper prepared by the British and Irish Governments was almost final. It was hoped to present this on Tuesday afternoon although this might slip into Wednesday.

15. McMichael asked about a Belfast Telegraph report that the paper had already been agreed. It made things difficult for participants if the media had information before them. The Minister dismissed this as pure speculation. It would not be possible to table the paper until it had been finally agreed. McMichael seemed to accept this and added that the UDP wanted a determination of the decommissioning issue once and for all, although they were sympathetic to the UUP position on pigeon holing. If the paper was produced on Tuesday afternoon, McMichael thought there would be some huffing and puffing from McCartney but the plenary would then have to adjourn to give the participants time to study the paper. The Minister agreed.

16. McMichael emphasised that the UDP particularly wanted movement before any summer recess. This should be very helpful to his party and others, to help dispel the perception that talks were not making progress.

17. The Minister agreed that things should not be spun out. If the paper could not be presented tomorrow he thought that the Governments would simply have to inform the parties of this. The UDP felt it would be better in those circumstances to have a plenary to advise the participants even if no paper was available. Regarding the Prime Minister's statement, McMichael said that it would be important that any justification SF could show for IRA violence must be dispelled. There was a need to determine whether the Republican movement was seriously interested in joining the process, the rest of the

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participants were not prepared to contort the process to accommodate them. The statement should paint SF as unreasonable as not accepting what was already on offer.

18. McMichael said that people were losing interest in the process generally, because nothing was happening HMG needed to decide when the settlement train was leaving the station, there was a need to reach an early determination on decommissioning and to set a date for substantive negotiations. This would help to deal with the growing apathy with the talks process. People within Loyalism were looking for something to aim for and had nothing to show for their involvement - it was important that Loyalist parties could show that they were gaining something from involvement in the process. With the possibility of a break over the Summer, it was even more important that progress should be made. The UDP would prefer that no break was taken as it was important to move on.

19. The Minister said that he did not expect substantive negotiations this side of a summer break. He thought some kind of a summer break was likely, if only because many people would be away. He noted however, that last year some work had continued throughout the Summer and was prepared to look at this. He thought that bilaterals or trilaterals could certainly continue.

Meeting with the UKUP

20. The Minister had a short meeting with the UKUP to discuss the decommissioning paper. Most of the meeting was taken up by a lengthy attack by McCartney on the Government's handling of the Talks, in particular the issue of Sinn Fein's entry. McCartney began by saying, that there were two if not three sets of negotiations. HMG was negotiating privately with SF and with the UUP and deals were being sought. John Bruton had made it very clear to SF what was required and the Tanaiste had also made this clear on 3 June. Why then was it therefore necessary to have a further two or three meetings to explain the two Government's position? McCartney stuck to his view that these meetings were "exploratory rather than explanatory".

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21. McCartney went on: it now appeared that HMG had volunteered a document to SF, setting out terms which the talks participants had never heard including a statement that decommissioning was not an obstacle. When the Secretary of State had spoken of such things in the Talks on 3 June, she had not revealed the terms offered to SF. Indeed on that date she had described the meetings as exploratory. There was an implication here that any terms agreed with SF would be built into the Talks.

22. McCartney described the process as "dishonest" and "duplicitous"; the Labour party was slipping into all the old bad habits which had destroyed confidence in the Conservative Party. The only difference was that the Secretary of State was openly admitting that officials were meeting SF whereas Sir Patrick Mayhew had not been prepared to admit this. McCartney suggested that, but for the killing of the two RUC Constables, the talks participants might never have known the terms presented to SF. McCartney also wanted to know who it was would be comforted by confidence-building measures. He suggested that the only people to receive such comfort would be SF/PIRA, rather than ordinary people like him. The Government was well on the way to destroying any remaining confidence in the process.

23. The Minister responded by disputing that meetings with SF had been more than explanatory. The PM's statement on Wednesday would probably also provide a very public statement of HMG's position. So far as HMG's discussions with SF were concerned, it was not a matter for the participants to determine whether or not they were satisfied that SF should enter talks, but, as set out in legislation, a matter for the Secretary of State alone. There was therefore no obligation to discuss with the participants any clarification provided to SF. McCartney responded, that he, being a lawyer, could read the legislation as well as anyone. He was not questioning the Secretary of State's right to make this decision but rather her judgement. He stated that he had never known anyone who had lost so much credibility in six weeks, and suggested that "tactile geniality would not pass for policy".

24. Cedric Wilson managed to interject to ask if the terms were still on offer to SF. He suggested that the terms were being made public not in spite of, but rather because

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of, the deaths of the two RUC Constables. HMG had decided it was necessary to make it clear to SF what exactly was on offer. McCartney returned to his attack on the Secretary of State, saying that he had read her statement after the Manchester bombing, in which she had spoken of a last chance for SF. After the murder of the two RUC officers, she was still saying that if SF were to shape up they would be let in instead of declaring that they were to be excluded once and for all. Cedric Wilson added that dates for the current talks had only been announced after the Canary Wharf bombing to appease SF; the bombing had taken place because matters were not moving fast enough for SF.

25. In response to the Minister's question whether McCartney believed that the two murders were a direct reaction to the meetings with SF, McCartney said that he thought that they may have been planned before, but the decision to go ahead and not to cancel certainly constituted such a response. President Clinton's visit had shown him that it was possible for the Republican Movement to call a halt and to stick to this when it wanted to do so. He hoped the Minister would also ask the Chief Constable about paramilitary beatings. On the Loyalist side the figure for the last year was some 150, when a year ago such a figure had been only 29. These figures were also typical of the increase in IRA controlled areas.

26. Returning to his general attack on the talks process, McCartney said that on all of the respectable papers were speaking of it as a "fraudulent process" or a "so-called" peace process. There was a general view that the process was finished. The Labour Party had inherited and endorsed a process in which SF had been assured they would get what they wanted. It was all very well for the PM to use fine words at Balmoral, meanwhile endorsing policies which had the opposite effect. Effectively the people of NI were being offered the same choice provided by Henry Ford: they could have any settlement they liked as long as it was in the Frameworks proposals. The South African experience had been very different because the people of South Africa had owned the process. In NI, HMG owned the process, not the NI political parties. HMG would reach a decision which would be in the best interests of the British mainland, not those of NI. He had read the Labour Party policy document of 1988 on NI, he had been

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horrified by what he had read and could not fully understand from that document why Labour had been content with a bipartisan policy on frameworks. The Minister pointed out that this policy document had been written some considerable time ago without any visible effect.

27. Cedric Wilson came in again with a question as to whether the PM was meeting Party leaders on Tuesday. McCartney picked up the cue, and condemned David Trimble for being in London when he ought to be at the Talks. This proved the real game was being played elsewhere. The draft decommissioning paper had been shown to Trimble; why had it not also been shown the UKUP and the DUP? The reason was that no-one was interested in what the UKUP thought.

28. To complete his critique of the Talks process, McCartney concluded with an attack on the Entry to Negotiations Election, describing it as a "disgraceful bit of electoral chicanery", designed to ensure that the plenipotentiaries of paramilitary terrorism would be included. In response to a question from the Minister as to what he would find acceptable, McCartney said that he sought a ceasefire on the same basis as originally called for, a permanent ceasefire, not one which was merely credible or "unequivocal". If this were declared, then decommissioning would be much easier. The UKUP position was that quality of the ceasefire was much more important than the detail of decommissioning, as they had stated in the UKUP's submission on decommissioning

29. The meeting ended with McCartney excusing his rather vehement presentation, assuring the Minister that it was no way intended as a personal attack on him, that he felt very strongly about these issues and there was a need to argue the case strongly etc.

Meeting with the Irish Delegation

30. Mr Hill and I had a brief meeting with Mr Donoghue following the Minister's meetings with Parties earlier in the day to compare notes and to enquire whether the Irish had any further comments on the decommissioning paper.

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31. Mr Hill gave Mr Donoghue a brief read out of HMG's meeting with David Trimble, explaining that Mr Trimble was not happy with the decommissioning paper, and had called for it to be more clear about the Governments expectations. In particular, the paper should specify parallel decommissioning if that was what the Government's expected. Trimble also had not liked the arrangements for dealing with confidence-building measures and had wanted a review meeting at the first plenary at which Sinn Fein would have to sign up to decommissioning.

32. Mr Hill informed Mr Donoghue that Trimble's view was that it would be unhelpful to table the paper on Tuesday afternoon and sought his reaction to the possibility of deferring this until Wednesday morning, possibly circulating it during that morning without a plenary session. Mr Donoghue expressed some puzzlement as to what this would achieve. He did not see why circulating the paper on Wednesday would be more acceptable to Unionists than tabling it at a plenary on Tuesday. He explained that Trimble and other Unionists expected the PM's speech to provide some words of reassurance and tabling the paper on the same day, when it might be seen part of the overall package relating to the entry of Sinn Fein, could make it easier for Unionists to accept or at least more difficult for them to reject. Mr Donoghue undertook to consult and come back.

33. Regarding the text of the handling paper, Mr Donoghue raised two points. At paragraph 7, the word "consider" is set in quotation marks. Mr Donoghue suggested dropping the quotation marks to avoid highlighting a difference of interpretation. In paragraph 14 of the same speaking note, Mr Donoghue suggested dropping reference to inviting proposals to amend, "explaining" would be more acceptable.

34. Mr Donoghue suggested that the deployment of the decommissioning paper was more important than the text itself. It was crucial that the two Governments closed ranks to oppose any proposal for amendment. Any flexibility which the Irish might show on the remaining text was predicated on having such agreement on HMG. Mr Hill assured Mr Donoghue that we understood the Irish sensitivity on this point. It was also

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important to the Irish that both Governments should make it clear that the decommissioning paper had been finalised before the PM's meeting with Trimble on Tuesday.

(Signed)

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