

Miscellaneous

FROM: DIANE McNALLY
INTERNATIONAL & PLANNING DIVISION
27 March 1998

cc: Mr Thomas
Mr Bell
Mr Jeffrey
Mr Watkins
Mr Kelly
Mr Brooker
Mr Hill
Mr Beeton
Mr Maccabe
Mr McCusker
Mr Whysall
Mrs Bharucha
Ms Mapstone
Mrs Sear
Mr Reid
Mr Warner
Ms Healy
Mr Fergusson, RID
Mr Cary, W'ton
Mr Poston, Boston
Mr Johnston, BIS NY
Mr Lindsay(personal)
Mr Lemon(personal)

Ms Harper

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Without meaning to add to the mass of paper already in the system, I attach, as promised, an up-to-date copy of my Chronology of Events. It lists key political events which have taken place over the last ten years, particularly in the talks process and can serve as a useful reference guide. A more detailed list of major events from 1921 to 1993 is available from W D Flackes', Northern Ireland: A Political Directory.

2. If you or copy recipients have any suggested amendments or additions, please do not hesitate to let me know.

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

January 1989

Northern Ireland politicians from Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDP), Ulster Unionist Party (UP), Ulster Democratic Unionist Party (UP), and Alliance Party for Northern Ireland (API) meeting in Duisburg, Germany in 1988 explored ideas about a basis for inter-party talks which would enable them to circumvent the Unionist preconditions (that there could be no talks about new arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland unless the Anglo-Irish Agreement had been suspended). It was proposed that talks should take place during a "gap" in Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference meetings. Denounced by the party leaderships.

May - September 1989

NI political leaders held discussions with Dr Brian Mawhinney, Northern Ireland Office Minister, to find a way of beginning substantive talks.

9 January 1990

Addressing Bangor Tourist Development Association, the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr Peter Brooke QC MP said he believed there was "enough common ground" to hold talks on future arrangements in NI and sketched out the ground such talks would need to cover.

9 January 1990 - March 1991

Mr Brooke held bilateral discussions with Irish Government and main Northern Ireland parties.

9 November 1990

Mr Brooke indicated that the Government had no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland. Britain's purpose was not to occupy or exploit, but to ensure democratic debate and free democratic choice.

26 March 1991

Mr Brooke told the House of Commons that the Talks would be arranged in three "strands" corresponding to the three main sets of relationships which need to be addressed in any overall political settlement; those within Northern Ireland, including the relationship between any new institutions there and Parliament at Westminster (Strand 1), those among the people on the island of Ireland (Strand 2) and those between the two Governments (Strand 3). Nothing would be finally agreed in any one strand until everything was agreed in the talks as a whole; the talks would be confidential; that the outcome, in the final analysis, would need to be acceptable to the people; and there would be no meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference between two specified dates.

30 April 1991

The Government and the four main NI Parties began discussions on Strand 1. This was the first time since 1976 that all the main constitutional political parties had sat down to discuss political issues.

17 June 1991

Plenary meetings began following discussions about procedural issues.

3 July 1991

Round table talks between the Government and NI Parties concluded. Mr Brooke reported that the period set aside for the Talks, as laid down in the March 1991 statement, had come to an end. He and the party leaders agreed that the Talks had been valuable and had produced genuine dialogue.

9 March 1992

Round table discussions resumed. The political parties agreed that Talks would continue up to point where UK General Election was called, and would resume following a post-election meeting of Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

9 April 1992

UK General Election.

29 April 1992

Discussions reconvened. Discussions initially concentrated on relationships within Northern Ireland.

6 July 1992

Irish Government formally joined discussions to consider wider relationship within the island of Ireland (Strand 2). An historic occasion - it being the first time since 1920 that the two Governments and representatives of all major NI constitutional parties had met to discuss the political future of Northern Ireland. Meetings took place at Lancaster House, London, under Chairmanship of Sir Ninian Stephen, a former Governor-General of Australia.

28 July 1992

Strand 3 of the discussions began involving the British and Irish Governments led by the Secretary of State, now Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP and the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr Andrews.

21 September 1992

James Molyneaux led a UUP delegation to Dublin for plenary meeting of the Strand 2 Talks.

10 November 1992

The Talks delegations held a plenary session to conclude the process which began on 9 March 1992. As in 1991, the Talks had been held during a period of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. Since the next meeting of the Conference had been set for 16 November (having been postponed to allow for a longer period of Talks), the present round of Talks came to an end.

In a Joint Statement on the Talks, all of the participants acknowledged that they had identified and discussed most, if not all of the elements which would comprise an eventual settlement, and had increased their understanding of each others' respective positions. All agreed that further dialogue was both necessary and desirable and that they would enter into informal consultations to seek a way forward. Sir Ninian Stephen, said he believed that the objective of a

comprehensive settlement remained valid and achievable.

26 November 1992

Irish Government Elections.

12 January 1993

Formation of new Fianna Fail and Labour Coalition in the Republic.

19 May 1993

Local Government elections in Northern Ireland.

15 September 1993

Minister for Political Development, Michael Ancram, began a series of private bilateral discussions with three of the four main NI parties, to explore the basis on which they might come together for further dialogue. UDUP declined to participate.

7 October 1993

John Hume, Leader of the SDLP, briefed the Taoiseach and Tanaiste (Deputy Taoiseach) on the agreement he had reached in discussion with Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Fein.

29 October 1993

Mr Major and Mr Reynolds issued a joint statement in Brussels, agreeing that an initiative on the future of NI could only be taken by the two Governments, and that there was no question of their endorsing the Hume/Adams agreement. The Governments would continue their discussions to provide a framework to carry the Talks process forward. If and when there was a renunciation of violence, new doors could open, and both Governments would wish to respond imaginatively to the new situation which would arise.

11 November 1993

UDUP launched "Breaking the Logjam" document.

15 November 1993

Mr Major, speaking at the Guildhall, London, indicated that the elements were coming together which provided an opportunity for peace. The Government was seeking a framework for peace, stability and reconciliation. The two objectives of permanent cessation of violence and

intensification of political talks were complementary. Mr Major also set out conditions for Sinn Fein's entry into the political arena - the ending of violence for good by the IRA.

15 December 1993

Joint Declaration made by the Taoiseach and Mr Major was published. It set out the constitutional principles and political realities which safeguard the vital interests of both sides of the community in NI. Based on the fundamental principles of democracy and consent, it also complemented and underpinned the political Talks process.

The Declaration provided Sinn Fein with the opportunity to enter into constitutional politics. It said that those democratically mandated parties which established a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods would be allowed to participate fully in democratic politics, in due course, and to join in dialogue on the way ahead.

24 February 1994

Michael Ancram began a series of bilateral meetings with the SDLP, UUP and Alliance Party to discuss a "Notions" document, which was not a blueprint for a settlement, but ideas based on the Government's assessment of the broad areas of agreement which had so far emerged across all three strands. As a partner in the Talks process the Irish Government was also given a copy of the document.

28 February 1994

UUP published its "Blueprint for Stability".

9 June 1994

European elections

31 August 1994

IRA issued Statement announcing "a complete cessation of military operations from midnight".

16 September 1994

Mr Major announced in Belfast that the final outcome of the 3 Stranded political Talks process, would be put to the electorate in NI for approval in a referendum.

13 October 1994

"Combined Loyalist Military Command" announced that it would "universally cease all operational hostilities as from 12 midnight and that "Permanence of our ceasefire will be completely dependent upon the continued cessation of all Nationalist/Republican violence, the sole responsibility for a return to War lies with them".

21 October 1994

Mr Major announced in Belfast that once the Joint Framework Document was complete, it would be published simultaneously with details of the Government's own understanding of the elements which would comprise new arrangements within Northern Ireland, based on work done in discussions in 1992 with the Northern Ireland parties. He also said that the Government was prepared to make a "working assumption" that the IRA ceasefire was intended to be permanent, and that the Government could move carefully towards the beginning of dialogue with Sinn Fein.

16-19 November 1994

Mr Spring resigned as Tanaiste, and the Labour Party left the Irish Coalition Government. Mr Reynolds resigned as Taoiseach and replaced as Leader of Fianna Fail by Bertie Ahern.

9 December 1994

Government officials initiated exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein, led by Martin McGuinness.

13-14 December 1994

International Investment Conference in Belfast.

Mr John Bruton (Fine Gael) became Taoiseach, leading the new Coalition Government of Fine Gael, Labour and the Democratic Left.

15 December 1994

British Government Officials began exploratory dialogue with "Loyalists" represented by the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) and Progressive Unionist Party (PUP),

led by Gary McMichael and David Ervine respectively.

1 February 1995

The Times leaked selective, misleading and highly tendentious excerpts from a draft of the Joint Framework Document, which had not been agreed by the British and Irish Governments.

20 February 1995

UDUP published its policy document "DUP Formula for Political Progress: The need and advantages of a new, fair and operable negotiating process".

21 February 1995

UUP published its paper, "A Practical Approach to Problem Solving in Northern Ireland".

22 February 1995

"Frameworks for the Future" launched. Part I - "A Framework for Accountable Government in Northern Ireland" - paper by the British Government proposing possible new democratic institutions in Northern Ireland; and Part II - "A New Framework for Agreement" - joint paper by the British and Irish Governments, which offers proposals for relationships within the island of Ireland and between the two Governments.

Both documents represent a fair and balanced package, and are intended to assist discussion and negotiation in the Talks process. Neither is a rigid blueprint to be imposed.

7 March 1995

In speech at Four Seasons Hotel in Washington the Secretary of State set out "three Washington criteria" for Sinn Fein's participation in all-party talks: a willingness in principle to disarm progressively; a common practical understanding of the modalities, that is to say what decommissioning would actually entail, in order to test the practical arrangements, and to demonstrate good faith; and decommissioning of some arms as a tangible

confidence building measure and to signal the start of a process.

Peter Robinson MP (UDUP) published an analysis of the "Frameworks" document called "The Union Under Fire".

22 March 1995

Michael Ancram joined exploratory dialogue with UDP and PUP representatives.

13 April 1995

The Secretary of State invited the leaders of the UUP, UDUP, SDLP and Alliance Parties to separate bilateral meetings to discuss the issues on which agreement would need to be found if there were to be an accommodation which satisfactorily encompassed all the relevant relationships.

24 April 1995

The Government announced that following intensive exchanges with Sinn Fein the Government believed that a sufficient basis existed for the entry of Ministers into the exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein.

10 May 1995

Michael Ancram joined exploratory dialogue with Sinn Fein.

18 May 1995

Joint UUP/SDLP delegation met the Prime Minister to discuss social and economic issues.

24 May 1995

Secretary of State and Gerry Adams met at Washington Investment Conference.

15 June 1995

Robert McCartney QC won North Down by-election standing as UK Unionist.

27 June 1995

Prime Minister and Taoiseach at European Council Summit in Cannes, discussed principles governing the decommissioning of illegal arms.

18 July 1995

Private meeting between Secretary of State and Gerry Adams in Londonderry.

27 July 1995

Secretary of State and Michael Ancram met Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness at Stormont Castle.

- 25 August 1995 CLMC issued statement making it clear that provided the rights of the Northern Ireland people "are upheld the CLMC will not initiate a return to war. There shall be no first strike".
- 27 August 1995 Rt Hon James Molyneaux resigned as leader of UUP
- 1 September 1995 IRA issued statement repeating call for all-party talks and criticising the attitude of the British Government.
- 8 September 1995 David Trimble elected new leader of UUP.
- 2 October 1995 David Trimble met Taoiseach in Dublin.
- 28 November 1995 Prime Minister and Taoiseach issued Joint Communiqué launching Twin Track Initiative: an International Body to examine the issue of decommissioning illegal arms, and a parallel phase of preparatory talks to examine the basis, participation, structure, format and agenda for all-party negotiations.
- 30 November 1995 The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach announced the establishment of the International Body on Decommissioning. Former US Senator George Mitchell would be Chairman and the other two members would be General John De Chastelain of Canada and former Prime Minister of Finland, Mr Harri Holkeri.
- 29-30 November 1995 US President Clinton and Mrs Clinton visited Northern Ireland.
- 1 December 1995 Secretary of State and Tanaiste issued parallel invitations to 9 Northern Ireland parties to preparatory talks.
- 11 December 1995 The Secretary of State commenced a round of bilateral meetings with the Northern Ireland parties to discuss their views on the way forward.

17 January 1996

First trilateral meeting involving the British and Irish Governments and Sinn Fein in Castle Buildings, Belfast.

24 January 1996

International Body on Decommissioning produced its Report concluding that: "the paramilitaries will not decommission any arms prior to all-party negotiations", set out 6 principles of democracy and non-violence to which it said all parties should adhere; set out guidelines on the modalities of decommissioning; and noted a number of confidence-building measures, including, if it were broadly acceptable, an elective process, appropriately mandated, and within the three strand structure.

24 January 1996

Prime Minister's response in House of Commons stated that in light of the Body's Report two ways existed in which all-party negotiations could move forward: a start to decommissioning before all-party negotiations; or the securing of a democratic mandate for all-party negotiations through elections specifically for that purpose. Both consistent with the Body's Report, but for parties to determine.

9 February 1996

At 6 pm the IRA announced the end of their ceasefire and this was followed by explosions at South Quay, Canary Wharf, London in which two people were killed.

12 February 1996

Prime Minister's statement in House of Commons stated that both British and Irish Governments agreed that in absence of genuine end to renewed violence, meetings between Ministers and members of Sinn Fein are not acceptable and cannot take place.

28 February 1996

Prime Minister and Taoiseach issued Joint Communiqué following Summit meeting setting out a clear path to all-party negotiations beginning on 10 June 1996 following a broadly acceptable elective process. They agreed that until there is an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire

of August 1994 Ministers would not meet Sinn Fein, nor would Sinn Fein participate in negotiations. Also at the outset of negotiations all parties would need to commit themselves to the 6 Mitchell principles; address at that stage the Mitchell proposals on decommissioning and provide reassurance that a meaningful and inclusive process of negotiations was genuinely on offer.

4-13 March 1996

Intensive consultations took place between Northern Ireland parties and British and Irish Governments in different configurations with the aim of achieving widespread agreement on an elective process; on ground rules for negotiations; and to consider the case for a referendum.

8 March 1996

Consultation documents on elected forum, transition to negotiations and electoral models issued to parties for comment.

15 March 1996

Consultation document on Ground Rules for the negotiations issued to parties.

21 March 1996

Prime Minister announced Government's proposals to introduce legislation to provide for elections in Northern Ireland on 30 May 1996 leading directly to all-party negotiations on 10 June 1996.

16 April 1996

British Government published draft Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Bill and Command Paper 3232 on the Ground Rules for Substantive All-Party Negotiations.

17 April 1996

Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Bill introduced into House of Commons providing for elections in Northern Ireland for the purpose of providing delegates from among whom participants in negotiations may be drawn; for a forum constituted by those delegates; and for referendums in Northern Ireland.

29 April 1996

The Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act received Royal Assent.

30 May 1996

Elections held in Northern Ireland based on a list system but on a constituency basis and supplemented by Northern Ireland wide party preference. This option was unique and drew on each of the ideas canvassed by the parties during the intensive negotiations.

10 June 1996

Prime Minister and Taoiseach launched multi-party negotiations involving 9 of the Northern Ireland political parties: the Alliance Party for Northern Ireland, DUP, Labour, Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, PUP, SDLP, UDP, UKUP, UUP and the British and Irish Governments.

Sinn Fein also secured representation in the elections but was not invited to attend the Talks because of the absence of an IRA ceasefire.

11 June 1996

All participating parties confirmed their total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the report of the International Body.

12 June 1996

Former US Senator George Mitchell assumed Chair of the Opening Plenary Session. General John de Chastelain of Canada and former Prime Minister of Finland, Mr Harri Holkeri, were appointed as Chairmen of Strand 2 and the Business Committee and alternate Chairmen respectively.

22 July 1996

Prime Minister met political representatives from the Loyalist parties; UDP and PUP.

29 July 1996

Multi-Party talks adjourned for summer break. Before doing so the participants agreed Rules of Procedure and established a Business Committee.

9 September 1996

Multi-party talks resumed in Castle Buildings, Belfast.

15 October 1996	Talks participants agreed, by "sufficient consensus" the agenda for the remainder of the Opening Plenary.
18 December 1996	Talks adjourned until 13 January when bilaterals would take place until the next Plenary Session scheduled for 27 January 1997.
5 March 1997	Talks suspended.
20 March 1997	Forum suspended
2 May 1997	UK General Election
21 May 1997	Local General Elections in Northern Ireland.
31 May 1997	PM Statement on Famine.
3 June 1997	Talks resumed
13 June 1997	HMG sent Aide Memoire to Sinn Féin setting out Government's position regarding their entry into the talks process.
25 June 1997	HMG and Republic of Ireland Government published joint paper on proposals for resolving decommissioning issues. Simultaneously published Aide Memoire setting out HMG's position in relation to Sinn Féin and talks.
16 July 1997	HMG and Republic of Ireland published speaking notes on their Joint Paper of 25 June and on Aide Memoire.
20 July 1997	IRA announced an unequivocal restoration of ceasefire of August 1994.
23 July 1997	The two Governments proposals for resolving decommissioning failed to secure sufficient
29 July 1997	Talks adjourned for summer recess.
29 August 1997	Secretary of State announced that she decided Sinn Fein could enter negotiations following 6 weeks of unequivocal ceasefire.

- 9 September 1997 Talks resumed in Castle Buildings. Sinn Fein joined talks process and signed up to Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence.
- 11 September 1997 IRA spokesman declared in "An Phoblacht" that "IRA would have problems with some sections of the Mitchell principles".
- 16 September 1997 Explosion at Markethill, Co. Armagh.
- 16 September 1997 UUP submitted representation calling for Sinn Fein to be excluded from talks process.
- 23 September 1997 Two Governments published conclusions that Sinn Fein had not "demonstrably dishonoured" their commitment to Mitchell Principles.
- 24 September 1997 Procedural Motion agreed by "sufficient consensus" enabling conclusion of opening Plenary session and launch of substantive negotiations.
- International Commission on Decommissioning established with General de Chastelain appointed as Chairman. US Ambassador Don Johnson and Brigadier Tauno Nieminen of Finland appointed as other members.
- 7 October 1997 Strands One, two and Three of the substantive negotiations launched.
- 13 October 1997 Prime Minister visited Northern Ireland and met talks delegations.
- 11 December 1997 Sinn Fein met Prime Minister at Downing Street.
- 15 December 1997 Talks recessed for Christmas.
- 27 December 1997 Murder of Billy Wright at HMP Maze.
- 9 January 1998 SoS visited Maze Prison.

12 January 1998

British and Irish Governments' Joint Paper on "Propositions on Heads of Agreement" tabled and published." which set out the framework for a settlement based on the views of the parties. All parties, with the exception of Sinn Fein, welcomed the Propositions paper as a basis for moving the negotiations forward.

Will include a devolved Government for Northern Ireland; a North-South Ministerial Council; a Council of the two islands to deal with the totality of relationships involving the Westminster and Irish Governments and the representatives of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; new intergovernmental machinery and balanced constitutional change in the Republic of Ireland and the UK based on the principle of consent in relation to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland; and also proposes further work on human, civil, political, social, economic and cultural issues to safeguard the rights of both communities in Northern Ireland.

26-28 January 1998

Talks moved to Lancaster House in London.

26 January 1998

UDP excluded from talks process.

27 January 1998

Strands 2 & 3 structures published.

30 January 1998

PM met talks delegates.

30 January 1998

PM's "Bloody Sunday" Statement.

16-18 February

Talks process moved to Dublin.

20 February 1998

Sinn Fein excluded from talks process (able to return 9 March).

23 February 1998

UDP returned to talks process.

23 March 1998

Sinn Fein returned to talks process.