

RECORD OF A PLENARY MEETING HELD IN PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS ON  
WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE 1991

Those Present

<u>Government Team</u>	<u>Alliance Party</u>	<u>UDUP</u>
Secretary of State	Dr Alderdice	Mr Robinson*
Minister of State	Mr Close	Mr McCrea
Mr Fell	Mr Neeson	Mr Wilson
Mr Pilling	Mrs Bell	Mr Campbell
Mr Thomas	Mr Dickson	Mr Gibson
Mr McNeill	Mr McBride	Mr McClure
	Mr Morrow	
	Mr Jones	
	Mr Macquire	
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	<u>SDLP</u>	<u>UUP</u>
Mr Hill	Mr Hume	Mr Molyneaux
Mr Brooker	Mr Mallon	Mr Maginnis
	Mr McGrady	Mr Trimble
<u>Also present</u>	Mr Hendron	Mr Allan
	Mr Farren	Mr Empey
Mr Pawson	Mr Haughey	Mr McGimpsey
	Mr Feely	
	Mr Maginness	

\* For the first part of the meeting.

A plenary meeting of strand one of the Talks took place at Parliament Buildings between 2.21 and 3.45 pm on Wednesday 26 June.

The Three Relationships

2. Picking up discussion from the pre-lunch session, the UDUP recalled that the SDLP had appeared to assent to the proposition that, if an accommodation could be reached which gave the minority a satisfactory say in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, there would be no need for a direct involvement by the Irish Government in such affairs (a general relationship would continue to be necessary). On the assumption that that was so, what would the SDLP regard as being the main ingredients for an internal structure? The SDLP replied that details were a matter for later stages of the

discussions but the main requirement was for arrangements which satisfactorily accommodated the two identities in Northern Ireland. The SDLP confirmed that they would table a paper on perceived realities and requirements at a later stage.

3. There was general assent to a proposition, from the Government Team, that the advent of a political accommodation which entailed new and agreed definitions of the relationships with the rest of the UK and the rest of the island of Ireland would be more stable and satisfactory.

4. In response to a proposition from the Government Team, there was general agreement that, as reflected in the 26 March statement, the external and internal relationships were interlinked and that real progress would only be possible by finding ways of giving adequate expression to the totality of the three main relationships. The UDUP said that they had signed up to the three stranded process and so recognised that there had to be an all-encompassing agreement. The UUP said that they had been saying ever since the 1986 by-election that the framework was all important, and that remained their view. The UDUP expressed satisfaction at the extent to which the SDLP were prepared to recognise that the Unionist community had a British identity and to allow them to define themselves in a British/Irish context. The UUP explained that the concept of a wider British/Irish relationship went back to the summit of 1980 and developments in 1981. The then Prime Minister and Taoiseach appeared to have in mind a relationship between the two countries which was coextensive with the territory of both states rather than, as turned out to be the case under the Agreement, a relationship relating solely to Northern Ireland. In response to a question from the UDUP, the SDLP said that as far as they were concerned it was for the two Governments to decide whether or not they wished to formalise relationships on a broader basis than the current agreement. The UUP said that a British/Irish Agreement, which went wider than the Anglo-Irish Agreement, could be helpful to both sides of the community in Northern Ireland. It might for example allow issues such as standards of justice towards Irish people in the English Courts to be raised with the British Government, an issue excluded under the present agreement.

Constitutional Politics/Defeating Terrorism

5. The meeting discussed the relationship between a political accommodation and the security situation. The UUP said that, whilst a political accommodation would bring social and economic benefits to the people of Northern Ireland it would not, in itself, provide a platform for the ending of terrorism. Ultimately that depended upon the attitude of the two Governments and was thus out of the hands of local politicians. If terrorism was to be ended a firmer commitment was needed by the two Governments. The problem was not that there was a political vacuum which the terrorists were exploiting but that the two Governments were not sufficiently committed to defeating terrorism. Like the Mafia, terrorism had now become endemic. It had as much to do with criminality and gangsterism as political ambition.

6. The SDLP said that it was important to understand what motivated people to become involved in terrorism. It was true that there was an element of gangsterism but people also became involved in terrorism as a reaction to local circumstances in Northern Ireland as well as for ideological reasons. Gangsterism was difficult to deal with but legislation had been passed and efforts were being made to get to grips with it. Others became involved because of a reaction to local circumstances. Young people had grown up without knowing what it was like to live in a society without violence. They were subjected to a wide range of social and personal pressures from their peer groups, local communities, etc. Misbehaviour by the security forces could also produce a grievance which drove people towards terrorism. There were also the idealists who were intellectually persuaded that violence offered the only way forward. Theirs was not "mindless violence"; they had taken the intellectual decision to follow the course they had chosen. One of the dichotomies was that terrorism often stemmed from local communities which would not, in other circumstances, be involved in criminal activity. This was the case on both sides of the community. Given these factors, it was clear that terrorism was not

solely a matter to be dealt with by the security forces. The participants to the Talks had it within their gift to influence some of the factors which led to terrorism, particularly "reactive" terrorism.

7. The UUP said that all the delegations had recognised at an earlier stage that the Talks process was not a peace conference. The UUP accepted, however, that political, social and economic issues could be of relevance in the defeat of terrorism although they remained of the view that the overriding factor was the two Governments' commitment to overcoming terrorism.

8. The SDLP believed that the potential effect on terrorism was a central issue to the Talks process. There was a long Nationalist tradition of martyrdom in the Irish cause and it was the job of constitutional politicians to try to undermine that. The IRA argued that they were justified in using force because they were fighting for the right of self-determination for the Irish people. If a political accommodation could be reached between the political parties in Northern Ireland, and with the Republic of Ireland, that argument could be undermined. The political accommodation would allow constitutional politicians to confront the terrorists about who really represented the interests of the Irish people. For this reason, the participants in the Talks could make a very important contribution to undermining the justification for many people's commitment to terrorism. The IRA also argued that they were justified in using violence as a response to the British, who, they argued, were defending their own interests by force. The Secretary of State's own statements had gone some way to dispel that argument.

9. The UDUP said that all participants were engaged in the Talks process in order to try to reach a stable accommodation. That was right in itself. If such an accommodation could be achieved, and it then had the effect of undermining terrorism, everyone would be pleased. They referred to opinions expressed by Mr Enoch Powell who had said that the greatest encouragement to terrorists was uncertainty. There continued to be doubts about the future status of Northern Ireland but, if those doubts were removed, people would be confident about the future and the terrorists would be undermined

because their scope for influencing others would be reduced. There was thus a linkage between the political situation and terrorism. A further linkage was that if the security forces received cross-party support for their efforts, this helped them in their task of defeating terrorism.

10. In response to a question from the Government Team, the UDUP acknowledged that individuals could build up resentment against the security forces, if they were improperly treated by them, and that this could drive certain individuals towards the paramilitaries. But no-one around the table would expect to become a terrorist simply because they had been the victim of improper actions by the security forces and so there must be some other reason, with which those present could not personally identify, which made people react in that way. The UUP accepted that there probably were odd cases where members of the majority community had drifted towards terrorism as a result of improper actions by the security forces. In general, however, they believed that this had more to do with the attitudes inculcated into young people at an early age rather than the actions of the security forces.

11. The Alliance said that there was no one reason why people became involved in terrorism. The psychology of one individual could be very different from another. So far as the Talks were concerned, it was obvious that if there was to be effective security then there had to be co-operation at a political level. It would, indeed, be illogical for delegates to be arguing the case for some involvement in security if, at the same time, they were denying a linkage between politics and security.

12. The Alliance said that, essentially, there were two ways in which the problems of terrorism could be tackled. The first was by adopting a purely military approach. That would never produce more than a transient improvement, however. To treat terrorism merely as a security problem was merely to treat the symptoms and the problem would simply displace into another area. The alternative approach was to try to analyse and understand the underlying issues which created the problem in the first place. This approach was usually

slow and painstaking and simple expedients rarely worked. In the Alliance's view, a combination of both approaches was required. Neither method on its own would be likely to achieve progress.

13. The SDLP said that there were feelings of alienation on both sides of the community. Sections of both sides of the community felt outside the system, for different reasons. It was logical, therefore, that if a system could be devised which was endorsed by all the people of Northern Ireland they would then identify with it and alienation would diminish. Instead of Government and the institutions of Government being remote, people would feel they had a personal stake in them. That would allow the gangsters to be separated from the idealists. It was clearly the case, therefore, that political progress could have a major impact on reducing terrorism.

14. The meeting adjourned at 3.45 pm.

Talks Secretariat  
1 July 1991