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PUS

cc Mr Reid
Mr Payne
Mr Trevelyan
Mr Bourn

MEETING WITH UVF AT LANESIDE ON 27 MAY

1. At Mr Gibson's request I saw Mr Ken Gibson, Mr John Falls, Mr Tom Best and Mr Stanley Grey at Laneside last night. Mr Oatley was present.

2. The delegation said that they were having great difficulty in urging moderation on their colleagues. There were now those who would go on to the end and not even the workers could hold them back. The UVF's objective was to reduce the hold of the UUUC. They believed that the politicians were using the strike for their own purposes and at the end of the day the workers would be excluded from any part in the solution of Ulster's problems. The UVF had discussed this with the workers who agreed. Accordingly Mr Gibson had earlier in the day said at a meeting that the UVF were not prepared to see the UUUC politicians talking for them (he had got wind of the possibility of Messrs Paisley, West and Craig seeing the Secretary of State). Mr Glennie Barr, who had chaired the meeting, had deferred consideration of this question until today at 10 am. The UVF felt that this was a crunch issue and it was possible there might be moves to exclude them from the counsels of the UWC.

3. Apart from their concern that the UUUC was not representative of working class opinion the UVF felt very sincerely that the UUUC politicians were against power-sharing. This was something they and the workers believed to be an essential (although Mr John Falls said of course that this would be with people who accepted the Monarchy, etc). The term that the UVF preferred was equal responsibility.

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4. The UVF delegation found it difficult to articulate their demands. These appeared to be the promise of elections within one year (it is not clear whether they would accept the continuance of the power-sharing Executive (some remarks were made about "freezing it")). They were definitely against the Sunningdale Council of Ireland proposals even as modified in the Executive's recent statement.

5. I made clear to the delegation HMG's position on no negotiation (they touched on the possibility of Mr Glennie Barr - about whom they are somewhat ambivalent - and Mr Hugh Smyth seeing the Secretary of State to which I gave no definite answer). I urged on them the need for moderation and a withdrawal from the brink. Having demonstrated this strength of their feeling and the size of their support, could the strikers not now show supreme responsibility and go back to work?

6. The UVF's relationship with us has become very strange. They are desperately in need of advice as to how to achieve their aims of ensuring working-class, and above all UVF participation in politics and they seek this from us even though they know that there are basic differences between them and HMG on the strike. Further they are clearly worried that their position may be undermined by arrest of UVF leaders (I believe we should think very carefully before action is taken vis a vis UVF politicals - and I should be grateful to have the opportunity to comment on possible arrest lists).

7. I submit that thought should be given as to how to profit from this relationship which gives us our most direct entre to the UWC. It may be that it can only be used for fuelling possible dissension between the UUUC politicians and para-military organisations. But in doing this we would have to recognise that the UVF would expect HMG to ensure working-class participation (even if it was only through people like Mr Hugh Smyth) in any constitutional conference which might come about in the future. They would, I believe, argue that representatives of militant Catholic organisations should also attend.

J N ALLAN
28 May 1974

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MEETING WITH UVF AT LANESIDE AT 9PM ON 29 MAY 1974

Mr Gibson and Mr Falls came to Laneside on 29 May and talked to Mr Allan and Mr Outley.

The main points that emerged were:

- (a) The UVF put particular store on that part of the statement on the ending of the stoppage which called for the release of detainees. In the voting on this Messrs Craig and West had abstained. Mr West had at first opposed it on the grounds that it was not acceptable to his Unionist backbenchers but had been brusquely told that their views were of no interest. (The theme of resentment over the UUUC's politicians' attempts to take control of the strike ran through our discussions)
- (b) The UVF saw opposition to detention as a means of opening further dialogue with the IRA. (Mr Gibson hinted that there had been some communication with the IRA during the strike.) Could not the British help to engineer this, eg through the proposed Re-settlement Group about which Mr Gibson had been consulted?
- (c) Mr Gibson believed that the IRA would not immediately return to its campaign of violence. Mr Rory Brady's moderate remarks about phased withdrawal of British troops were interesting. Despite their rough words in public politicians, including Mr Paisley, were in favour of conversations with the IRA.
- (d) The Price Sisters should be returned to N Ireland, as should loyalist prisoners like Billy Campbell held in Scotland. Mr Gibson suggested that Loyalist leaders would probably start a campaign for the return of all such prisoners. Part of their aim in doing so would be to show solidarity with the Republicans.
- (e) The UVF had challenged the UUUC politicians to declare themselves on power sharing. They would make sure that the politicians kept their word given at strike meetings that they were in favour of power-sharing.

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- (f) Messrs West, Paisley and Craig were to be the mediators. They would be watched very carefully and the paramilitary and workers would demand after the first round of talks to be invited to further discussions, eg with the Secretary of State.
- (g) The UVF were strongly critical of UUUC politicians, especially Messrs Ardill, Laird, Taylor, and condemned Miss Coulter as a bigot. They were also implacably opposed to Tara and had arranged with News Letter that any donations in reply to the Tara advertisement of 23 May should be frozen and go to charity.
- (h) The UVF had been for the calling off of the strike. They had been impressed by arguments put forward at Laneside (see Mr Allan's minute of 28 May) of the need to return to work.
- (i) There was some difference in emphasis as to which demands of the strikers and paramilitary would now be pressed. Mr Gibson appeared not to see much point in further strike action at this stage, but Mr Falls said that this would come about if elections were not promised.
- (j) The calling of a stoppage was simple because of the stranglehold one or two men in the electricity industry now had. (During the strike the power workers' leaders had disseminated information on how to do this in case they had been arrested.)

2. Messrs Gibson and Falls saw the UVF as having an immediate role to play in two related spheres: it must assert itself in formal politics to increase working class Protestant representation (they contemplated launching a new party, possibly to be called the Ulster Democratic Party), and it must develop a relationship with the two wings of the IRA in order to contain violence. (It would maintain its own military capability while doing so.) Their role would be a key one. The UUUC politicians were not truly representative of Loyalist opinion, having benefited from a fluke situation; the UWC were vulnerable to UUUC pressure; the UDA lacked cohesion, discipline and political direction; the UVF must move into the gap.

J N ALLAN
31 May 1974

cc Mr Reid
Mr Payne
Mr Trevelyan ✓
Mr Bourn

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