



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

18 June 1980

Nick Sanders Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear Nick,

In your letter of 11 June you sought a draft reply to Dr Paisley's request to see the Prime Minister with a delegation of South Fermanagh widows.

As you know, Mr Atkins did in fact see the three DUP MP's and six ladies (four of them widows) last Friday. A note of the meeting is attached and you will see from this that it was a fairly emotional occasion. The delegation appear to have decided before the meeting took place that the large number of letters they had inspired about the Fermanagh security situation should not be handed to the Secretary of State, but should be presented personally to the Prime Minister (as originally intended).

The best course would seem to us to be for the Prime Minister to see a small number of widows - perhaps the four who attended on Friday - and take receipt of the letters. But we would suggest that the DUP MPs should not be invited to accompany them. As I explained to Michael Alexander in my letter of 10 June prior to the meeting with Lord Brookeborough, Unionists of various shades are engaged in a political battle for the favours of isolated Protestant families in South Fermanagh, and the DUP seem to us to be behaving particularly cynically over these widows. They would be able to make much of a visit to No 10, and Mr Atkins would hope this can be avoided.

We do recognise that a meeting with just the widows could prove difficult to arrange. However, if the DUP do dig their heels in and insist on being there, we hope you would be equally resolute: Dr Paisley's only link with South Fermanagh is as an MEP and he has already accompanied the party (with his two colleagues who have even less of a locus) to a long and thorough meeting with the Secretary of State. The proposed visit to No 10 should be on a rather different basis.

I attach for consideration a draft reply to Dr Paisley on these lines.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins

M W HOPKINS

London Copyist
19/6/80

10/5

NOTE OF A MEETING AT STORMONT CASTLE ON FRIDAY 13 JUNE 1980

Those present: Secretary of State Dr Paisley
Mr Wyatt Mr Robinson
Mr Gilliland Mr McQuade
Mr Burns
Mr Harrington Mrs R Latimer
Mr Margetts Mrs D Latimer
 Mrs Kernaghan
 Mrs Morrow
 Mrs Howe
 Mrs Hutchinson

Prologue

1. Dr Paisley had previously sought the Prime Minister's agreement to a meeting with himself and women from County Fermanagh. The Prime Minister had been unable to arrange such a meeting and had asked the Secretary of State to see Dr Paisley. During the afternoon preceding the meeting (which started at 1800 hours) Dr Paisley had repeatedly attempted to expand the membership of the delegation to include some men to reinforce the womens' points. This demand was steadfastly refused.

2. The party of women, whose names are shown above, included four widows whose husbands had been the victims of terrorist violence. Mr Latimer, p/t UDR, shot dead 7 June 1980; Mr Kernaghan, p/t UDR, shot dead 15 October 1979; Mr Morrow, ex-p/t UDR, shot dead 17 April 1980 and Constable Howe, RUC, killed by a bomb, 11 February 1980. The remaining two women were Mrs D Latimer who was attending her grief-stricken sister-in-law, and Mrs Hutchinson whose husband is a member of the part-time security forces.

The meeting

3. Dr Paisley opened the meeting by reading to the Secretary of State one of many letters brought by the women as a petition to the Prime Minister. The letter which had been written by Mrs Latimer before the death of her husband and which sought immediate action to tighten up security in County Fermanagh caused a great deal of distress amongst the women. Mrs Kernaghan explained that these

letters were not to be handed to the Secretary of State for onward transmission to the Prime Minister; the delegation still wished to see Mrs Thatcher and to hand the letters over personally. The Secretary of State said that he would pass this request to the Prime Minister and asked whether the women had any specific ideas for improving security in County Fermanagh.

4. There was a great deal of support for closing border roads and sowing them with landmines. It was no good just cratering these roads since they could be quickly filled in; something permanent was required which would ensure that terrorists could not speedily escape across the border after carrying out the attack. It was further pointed out that vehicle checkpoints such as the one at the airport should be set up on a very restricted number of "approved" crossings. The Secretary of State said that he understood how blocking the roads would be a psychological boost to the morale of people near the border and added that he was currently studying the possibility of further road closures in the area and would welcome a note from the delegation specifying which roads they would prefer to see closed.

5. The delegation then turned to extradition as a means of resolving the cross-border terrorist threat. Mrs Morrow was obviously distressed by the "knowledge" that one of her husband's murderers was presently seen to be at liberty in Monaghan. The Secretary of State explained the difficulties involved in extraditing suspects from the Republic and said that pressure was being brought to bear upon the southern authorities to bring prosecutions under the extra territorial jurisdiction legislation.

6. The Secretary of State was then asked whether there was any possibility that the few remaining members of the security forces living in the Newtownbutler area could be afforded special protection. The Secretary of State said that he would talk to the Chief Constable

and GOC about the possibility of such protection and asked if details could be given about the persons under threat. The delegation immediately reacted by giving the following details.

Bertie Hutchinson }
Henry Johnston } p/t UDR
Alan Moffett }

Desmond Wilson - HUC(R)

John McVitty }
Ernest Johnston } HUC
Robert Norman Morrow }

7. The discussion then turned to the possibility of reintroducing capital punishment or, at worst, stiffer prison sentences for terrorists. The Secretary of State explained the difficulty attached to reintroducing the death sentence, given that there had long been a parliamentary majority in favour of its abolition. He added that since the life sentence was indeterminate it could not be extended.

8. Just before they left the Secretary of State was handed copies of the attached Notice which illustrates the mood of the delegation.

Epilogue

9. The meeting with the delegation having ended, the Secretary of State agreed that he would give the County Fermanagh menfolk a few minutes. He outlined very briefly what he had discussed with the women and explained how he required a full list of the roads to be closed and a full list of members of the security forces needing protection in the border area. He further explained that it was impossible to apply any economic sanctions against the Republic and Dr Paisley accepted that no progress would ever be made on extradition.

Jonathan Margrett
JONATHAN MARGRETT
Private Secretary

16 June 1960

IT'S NOT FAIR!

On Sunday morning I went into the Latimer House in Newtownbutler. The first words I heard from the distressed young widow were "Oh, it's not fair"! Since then I have thought a lot about these words, and now I can say with conviction - "It's not fair"!

It's not fair that a few young men are out patrolling our roads and towns at night while others lie secure in their beds. It's not fair that some women have to wait in fear to see if their husbands come home alive. It's not fair that some children have to ask the questions "Will Daddy ever be home again" ? while others have no such fears.

I say to you in all sincerity -

IT'S NOT FAIR.

What can YOU do to help?

You are not being asked to join any force or organisation, only to stand up and be counted as a Protestant - as a Protestant who cares, and as a Protestant who can say from the heart -

IT'S NOT FAIR.

From

A CARING MOTHER.

Distribution:

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