

# **THE BELFAST (GOOD FRIDAY) AGREEMENT**

**KS4 - LESSON 2**

# The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement

## Introduction

Please note, the transcripts of the resources retain any typographical errors included in the original documents.

This resource takes a twin track approach to the subject matter.

## Track 1: The significance of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement of 1998

The Agreement was clearly an event of huge historical significance. However, it can sometimes be difficult to articulate why this was the case. This collection of documents aims to help students to meet this challenge. In the first instance, they are presented with two documents in which prominent political figures clearly think the Agreement was significant and successful. They are then asked to examine six more documents which all illuminate some aspect of the attempts to implement the Agreement and make it work. In the process the documents also provide evidence of the difficulties faced and the determination of the participants to overcome these difficulties.

## Track 2: How historians use sources

This resource is NOT an examination practice paper. It is designed to take one step back from the exam question-based approach and to explore how historians think about documents and make use of them. The aim is that by understanding this set of fundamentals, students will be better equipped for the inevitably more limited approaches which examination conditions place on them. In this instance, students are introduced to the concept of a line of argument. This is a challenging idea, and it is difficult to master. With this in mind, we have provided some examples of lines of argument relating to the key issue of the significance of the Agreement for relations between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

## Suitable for:

CCEA GCSE History

## Time period:

1998

## Connections to the curriculum:

This resource is designed to support students tackling the CCEA GCSE Unit 1 Section B Local Study Option 2: Changing Relations: Northern Ireland and its Neighbours, 1965–98

The specific focus is on the significance of the Agreement for relations between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

## Prior Knowledge:

It is recommended that students watch the video From Conflict to Peace available on The National Archives website:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/belfast-good-friday-agreement/>

and on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQXBpt5RArY>

and undertake the discussion activity to gain an overview of The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and what it achieved.

The discussion resources are available from

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/belfast-good-friday-agreement/bgfa25-discussion-activity/>

In addition students should undertake the Downing Street Declaration lesson before completing this lesson.

## Using sources to evaluate a line of argument

The five possible lines of argument are:

- A. The Agreement ended all of the tensions over Northern Ireland between the UK and Ireland.
- B. The Agreement failed to ease tensions over Northern Ireland between the UK and Ireland.
- C. Some groups actively opposed the Agreement even after it was signed.
- D. All sides gave up on the Agreement after it was signed.
- E. Despite the problems, all sides worked hard to make the Agreement work and this helped to ease tensions over Northern Ireland between the UK and Ireland.

In each source we ask students to consider which argument the document could be used to support. For each document, there are additional questions to aid students in their analysis.

Students should complete the table before discussing which of the lines of argument are supported by the sources. It is possible that several are supported so they will then need to make a judgement about which has the most evidence and is the most convincing.

Once students have decided on a line of argument, they should develop an extended paragraph in response to the question “What was the significance of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement?” Their answer should explain why they have chosen the line of argument and what evidence from the sources supports it.

## Do these documents prove the Agreement was a success?

Show slide 3 and hand out the introductory source TNA Catalogue Ref PREM 49/412 - A letter from US Senator George Mitchell to UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, April 1998.

Following the model taught in the previous lesson about the Downing Street Declaration ask students to analyse the source for Content, Context, Attitudes and How things work. Use slide 4 to help them.

Similarly show them the lists of names on the TNA Catalogue Ref PREM 49/412 – Northern Ireland Letters of Congratulations from Heads of States and VIPs, (As of 27 April).

Discuss with students whether these documents prove that the Agreement was a success and why (or why not).

Complete this opening activity by discussing the following statements shown on slide 7 and deciding if you Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

- The documents have proved to me that the Agreement was a success.
- They prove that many important politicians believed that the Agreement was a success.
- The documents actually prove that the Agreement was a failure.
- The documents don't prove anything at all.
- The documents suggest the Agreement was a success but they do not prove it.
- It is a reasonable theory that the Agreement was a success but I would need more supporting evidence to convince me.

**Do these documents prove the Agreement was a success?**

**Office of the Independent Chairmen**

Castle Buildings Stormont Belfast BT4 3SG Northern Ireland  
Telephone 01232 522957 Facsimile 01232 768905

Top JEH 9/2  
JPO  
PB  
AC

April 30, 1998

*Prime Minister*  
④

The Rt Hon Mr Tony Blair, MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*File 11/5*

Dear ~~Tony~~

*Prime Minister*

It was a pleasure to work with you in the multi-party negotiations.

I am sure there were times when you felt discouraged and uncertain (as we all did), but in the end your commitment and perseverance prevailed.

I will always regard my participation in this process as one of the most meaningful things I've ever done. In large part that was due to the warmth and courtesy with which I was treated by all of the participants.

With my gratitude and best wishes,

*gjm*

GEORGE J. MITCHELL

*Your demonstrated leadership of a rare and high quality, and you made this possible. The hand of history chose well!*

General John de Chastelain

Senator George J. Mitchell

Prime Minister Harri Holkeri



## Transcript - TNA Catalogue Ref: PREM 49/412

Office of the Independent Chairmen  
Castle Buildings Stormont Belfast BT4 3SG Northern Ireland  
Telephone 01232 522957 Facsimile 01232 768905

April 30, 1998

The Rt Hon Mr Tony Blair, MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

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With my gratitude and best wishes,

GEORGE J. MITCHELL

[handwritten] You demonstrated leadership of a rare and high quality, and you made this possible. The hand of history chose well!

# Do these documents prove the Agreement was a success?

foreign/ni congrats

## NORTHERN IRELAND: LETTERS OF CONGRATULATION FROM HEADS OF STATE AND VIPs (As at 27 April)

Khalifa Bin Sulman AL KHALIFA  
Prime Minister of Bahrain

Kofi ANNAN  
Secretary-General of the United Nations

Emeka ANYAOKU  
Commonwealth Secretary-General

Paddy ASHDOWN MP

Norman BAKER MP

Ehud BARAK  
Chairman, The Israeli Labor Party

Ann BARRETT

David BLUNKETT MP

Kjell Magne BONDEVIK  
Prime Minister of Norway

Melyvn BRAGG

Jerzy BUZEK  
Prime Minister of Poland

Rafael CALDERA  
President of Venezuela

Jim CALLAGHAN

Roger CASALE MP

Jacques CHIRAC  
President of France

foreign/ni congrats

- 2 -

Vannino CHITI

Jean CHRETIEN  
Prime Minister of Canada

Charles CLARKE MP

Sir Patrick CORMACK MP

Flavio COTTI  
Swiss Federal Council

~~Maneck DALAL~~ PS (has replied in his own hand)

Sibusiso DLAMINI  
Prime Minister of Swaziland

Achbishop of DUBLIN (Empey)

Laurent FABIUS  
French National Assembly

Pamela GORDON  
Premier of Bermuda

Ryutaro HASHIMOTO  
Prime Minister of Japan

Sheikh HASINA Wazed  
Prime Minister of Bangladesh

King HASSAN  
Morocco

Edward HEATH  
(Did not write to PM but issued statement to Press Association)

Clive HOLLICK

John HOWARD  
Prime Minister of Australia

foreign/ni congrats

- 3 -

King HUSSEIN  
Jordan

Lord JAKOBOVITS

Greville JANNER

Lionel JOSPIN  
Prime Minister of France

Frank JUDD

Neil KINNOCK [NB: PM has replied in his own hand]

Wim KOK  
Prime Minister of The Netherlands

Chandrika Bandarnaike KUMARATUNGA  
President of Sri Lanka

Mr LEE Kuan Yew  
Senior Minister of Singapore

Federico MAYOR  
UNESCO

Pierre MAUROY

Paddy MAYHEW

Carlos MENEM  
President of Argentina

Yehudi MENUHIN

Lennart MERI  
President of the Republic of Estonia

Mohamed Hosni MUBARAK  
President of Egypt

foreign/ni congrats

- 4 -

Ntsu MOKHEHLE  
Prime Minister of Lesotho

Swraj PAUL

Jordi PUJOL  
President of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia

Giles RADICE MP

Poul RASMUSSEN  
Prime Minister of Denmark

George ROBERTSON MP

Dr Alfred SANT  
Prime Minister of Malta

Jenny SHIPLEY  
Prime Minister of New Zealand

Jeremy THORPE

Cecil WALKER MP

James T WALSH  
Friends of Ireland

## Transcript - TNA Catalogue Ref: PREM 49/412

### NORTHERN IRELAND: LETTERS OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM HEADS OF STATE AND VIPs (As at 27 April)

- Khalifa Bin Sulman AL KHALIFA  
Prime Minister of Bahrain
- Kofi ANNAN  
Secretary General of the United Nations
- Emeka ANYAOKU  
Commonwealth Secretary-General
- Paddy ASHDOWN MP
- Norman BAKER MP
- Ehud BARAK  
Chairman, The Israeli Labor Party
- Ann BARRETT
- David BLUNKETT MP
- Kjell Magne BONDEVIK  
Prime Minister of Norway
- Melvyn BRAGG
- Jerzy BUZEK  
Prime Minister of Poland
- Rafael CALDERA  
President of Venezuela
- Jim CALLAGHAN
- Roger CASALE MP
- Jacques CHIRAC  
President of France
- Vannino CHITI
- Jean CHRETIEN  
Prime Minister of Canada
- Charles CLARKE MP
- Sir Patrick CORMACK MP
- Flavio COTTI  
Swiss Federal Council
- ~~Maneck DALAL~~ [PS]
- Sibusiso DLAMINI  
Prime Minister of Switzerland
- Archbishop of DUBLIN (Empey)
- Laurent FABIUS  
French National Assembly
- Pamela GORDON  
Premier of Bermuda
- Ryutaro HASHIMOTO  
Prime Minister of Japan
- Sheikh HASINA Wazed  
Prime Minister of Bangladesh
- King HASSAN  
Morocco
- Edward HEATH  
(Did not write to PM but issued statement to Press Association)
- Clive HOLLICK
- John HOWARD  
Prime Minister of Australia
- King HUSSEIN  
Jordan
- Lord JAKOBOVITS
- Greville JANNER
- Lionel JOSPIN  
Prime Minister of France
- Frank JUDD
- Neil KINNOCK [NB: PM had replied in his own hand]
- Wim KOK  
Prime Minister of The Netherlands
- Chandrika Bandarnaike KUMARATUNGA  
President of Sri Lanka
- Mr LEE Kuan Yew  
Senior Minister of Singapore
- Frederico MAYOR  
UNESCO
- Pierre MAUROY
- Paddy MAYHEW
- Carlos MENEM  
President of Argentina
- Yehudi MENUHIN
- Lennart MERI  
President of the Republic of Estonia
- Mohamed Hosni MUBARAK  
President of Egypt
- Ntsu MOKHEHLE  
Prime Minister of Lesotho
- Swraj PAUL
- Jordi PUJOL  
President of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia
- Giles RADICE MP
- Poul RASMUSSEN  
Prime Minister of Denmark
- George Robertson MP
- Dr Alfred SANT  
Prime Minister of Malta
- Jenny SHIPLEY  
Prime Minister of New Zealand
- Jeremy THORPE
- Cecil WALKER MP
- James T WALSH  
Friends of Ireland





**Source 1 - The text of a speech by the Taoiseach Mr. Bertie Ahern, TD on the Approval of the Multi-Party Agreement in Belfast on Good Friday, 10 April 1998. The speech was delivered on 22 April 1998.**

**Context notes**

Bertie Ahern was the Irish Taoiseach, the Prime Minister of Ireland. In this speech he was setting out the Agreement to the Irish Seanad, the upper house of the Irish Dáil. The Agreement was the culmination of years of political initiatives, negotiations and many setbacks. It involved politicians from Northern Ireland, Britain, Ireland, the USA and the European Union.

**Questions**

**Content**

1. Make a list of the individuals and groups who, according to Ahern, contributed to the Agreement.

**Inferences from the Content**

2. Is it reasonable for a historian to infer that Bertie Ahern was proud of the Agreement? Explain your answer.
3. Is it reasonable to infer that the Agreement was the result of close co-operation between politicians in Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland? Explain your answer.

**Inferences from the Context**

4. Why does Ahern believe that the Agreement is historic?

**Lines of Argument**

Which line(s) of argument A-E could use this document as supporting evidence?

**Source 1 - The text of a speech by the Taoiseach Mr. Bertie Ahern, TD on the Approval of the Multi-Party Agreement in Belfast on Good Friday, 10 April 1998. The speech was delivered on 22 April 1998.**

Assessment of Agreement

I am laying before the House a settlement for peace in Northern Ireland. The political agreement concluded between all the participating parties on Good Friday, 10 April represents a major breakthrough in terms of consolidating peace and ending 30 years of conflict. The Agreement is historic in the true sense of the word. It not only supersedes previous initiatives, but it replaces both the legislation and the settlement of 1920 and 1921. In its place is an agreement capable for the first time of winning the support of both traditions in the North, and the support of North and South, as well as enhancing co-operation throughout these islands.

It is the culmination of many years' effort devoted to the peace process and of the three strand talks which began in 1991. Both have come together in one agreement. Many people have contributed to this achievement and shown real statesmanship. I would like to salute the political courage and leadership shown by John Hume and Gerry Adams and their close colleagues, also the priests who brought parties together. The Ulster Unionist leadership under David Trimble have made an indispensable and courageous contribution by their participation in negotiating and concluding this Agreement. Dr. John Alderdice of Alliance, the Loyalist leaders, the Women's Coalition and Labour in Northern Ireland also played a valuable role in supporting accommodation and bridging difference. The commitment of the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who put his full weight and presence behind the negotiations, was obviously of huge importance, as was the courage and perseverance of his Secretary of State Mo Mowlam, and her Deputy, Paul Murphy. I would also like to pay tribute to the essential groundwork of his predecessor John Major. I would like to pay tribute to my predecessors, Charles Haughey, who was Taoiseach when the process started, Albert Reynolds who concluded the Downing Street Declaration, and who made the first historic breakthrough towards ending violence, Deputy John Bruton who helped set the parameters and ground rules that started the talks in their most recent phase since June 1996, and Deputy Dick Spring who under successive Governments oversaw the preparation of the immensely valuable Framework Document, and Minister

Andrews, as well as Minister Liz O'Donnell, deserve our warmest thanks for the leadership they gave the Irish Government team in the talks, as do the other Ministers and Ministers of State who attended on a regular basis since 1996. The Attorney-General, David Byrne provided a vital input into key parts of the Agreement. The inter-departmental team of officials and advisers also deserve our gratitude for helping to pull the Strands of the Agreement together, as indeed do the officials attached to the British side and to the different party teams as well as the staff working with the Talks Chairmen. I would like to congratulate Senator George Mitchell and his colleagues, former Prime Minister Harri Holkeri and General John de Chastelain on their great achievement, and thank them for their wisdom and patience.

## Source 1 - Transcript

### Assessment of Agreement

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## Source 2 - A letter from the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, 10 June 1998

### Context notes

One of many controversial issues in the history of Northern Ireland was the system of policing. Many in the Nationalist community felt that the existing police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) did not represent them properly. As part of the Agreement, the RUC was to be replaced by a new force called the Police Service of Northern Ireland. An Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland was set up to study policing and make recommendations about how Northern Ireland was to be policed in the future. There was a great deal of heated debate about who should be appointed to be part of this Commission. The situation was not helped when a confidential document about the Commission was leaked to the press on 4 June 1998 and revealed how tense and angry the debate was over the Commission.

### Questions

#### Content

1. What is Ahern concerned about?
2. According to Ahern, why are Nationalists alarmed?

#### Inferences from the Content

3. Would historians be able to infer that Ahern is more concerned about not being consulted than about the actual decisions which have been made? Explain your answer.

#### Inferences from the Context

4. Is this source evidence that relations between the UK, Ireland and groups and politicians in Northern Ireland have broken down? Explain your answer.

### Lines of Argument

Which line(s) of argument A-E could use this document as supporting evidence?



**Source 2 - A letter from the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, 10 June 1998**



Oifig an Taoisigh  
Office of the Taoiseach

10 June, 1998.

The Right Honourable Tony Blair, M.P.,  
Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London.

Dear Tony,

I am writing to express my serious concern at the decisions taken on the Policing Commission and the Prisons Bill and in particular at the manner in which those decisions were taken.

Coupled with the leak of the Secretary of State's conversations about the Policing Commission they have created a real sense of alarm amongst Nationalists that some people in the system are attempting to claw back parts of the Good Friday Agreement with which they do not agree.

At this stage my principal concern is not to go over the past but to ensure that future decisions concerning the Agreement are reached after open discussion between us which reach a clear and agreed understanding of what each side will do. We can draw lessons from the Police Commission which caused unnecessary problems between us, damaged confidence in the balanced implementation of the Agreement and inflicted unnecessary discomfort on those who were willing to accept membership. All this could have been avoided had we sat down at an early stage, discussed possible names and reached agreement on the membership.

Likewise an early discussion of the Prisons Bill would have allowed me to put at that stage my strong view that the approach adopted in the Bill, of redefining what constitutes a ceasefire and of seeking to specify terrorist organisations may be storing up real problems.

Oifig an Taoisigh, Tithe an Rialtais, Baile Átha Cliath 2.  
Office of the Taoiseach, Government Buildings, Dublin 2.

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**Source 2 - A letter from the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, 10 June 1998**



Oifig an Taoisigh  
Office of the Taoiseach

- 2 -

I understand that your system is considering a number of early announcements post the 25 June Assembly Election. It is clear also that the parades issue and the formation of the Shadow Executive in Northern Ireland will be contentious. I would ask that you and the Secretary of State send a clear message to all relevant parts of your system, as I and David Andrews will be happy to do in our case, that any such decisions follow on open consultation between our systems. This message should make clear that adequate time be allowed for realistic consideration and decision at the political level between the two of us if that is required.

I trust you will appreciate my concern that we act in every way together to maximise the positive and minimise the contentious in the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and that we preserve the Agreement's essential balance. I know from your work in reaching the Agreement that that is very much your personal approach and wish. I believe that we both, with David Andrews and Mo Mowlam, need to make absolutely clear to our respective systems that we will not be diverted from that purpose.

Yours sincerely,

Bertie Ahern, T.D.,  
Taoiseach

Oifig an Taoisigh, Tithe an Rialtais, Baile Átha Cliath 2.  
Office of the Taoiseach, Government Buildings, Dublin 2.

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## Source 2 - Transcript

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Office of the Taoiseach  
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Yours sincerely,

Bertie Ahern, T.D., Taoiseach

## Source 3 - Extracts from a letter from the Irish Ambassador in London to Dermot Gallagher, a senior official in the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ireland June 1998

### Context notes

The author of this letter was Ted Barrington, Ireland's Ambassador to the UK. He was reporting back to his superiors in the Foreign Affairs Department of the Irish Government about a phone conversation with Mo Mowlam. Mowlam was the UK Government's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Paul Murphy MP was a UK Government Minister, a senior UK official, who worked in Mo Mowlam's department as Political Development Minister of State for Northern Ireland. A major part of Murphy's job was liaising with officials from Ireland.

### Questions

#### Content

1. According to Barrington what concerns does Mo Mowlam have?
2. What issues had "dented" relations between the UK and Ireland?
3. What was the underlying concern that Barrington said that the Irish Government had about how the UK had acted?

#### Inferences from the Content

4. Would historians be able to infer that on the whole Barrington was optimistic about relations between the UK and Irish governments?

#### Inferences from the Context

5. Can a historian make any inferences from this document about how well the UK and Irish governments were communicating or co-operating?

### Lines of Argument

Which line(s) of argument A-E could use this document as supporting evidence?



**Source 3 - Extracts from a letter from the Irish Ambassador in London to Dermot Gallagher, a senior official in the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ireland June 1998**

18/06/98 10:50 01719286868 SECURE-FX TRANSMISSION TRISH EMBASSY -->0035314757822 Pg. 01

AMBASAID NA NEIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

17, GROSVENOR PLACE, SW1X 7HR  
Telephone 0171-235 2171  
Direct Line: 0171-201 2  
Fax: 0171-245 6961

18 June 1998

Mr. Dermot Gallagher  
Second Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Dublin 2

RECEIVED 23 JUN 1998  
*File / notes  
Mr. Taylor. He death: to be discussed  
Counselors #1  
VE 18/6*

*Taoiseach  
hvk  
23.6.98*

Dear Secretary,

Conversations with Mo Mowlam and Tony Blair

Mo Mowlam telephoned me late last night. She said she was concerned at what she saw as emerging difficulties between the British and Irish sides; her feeling was that things were "different" in recent weeks and that there was not the same level of trust between us as before. As an instance of this she wondered whether that British Ministers were having some difficulties in arranging meetings with the Irish side. Although she herself would be seeing Minister Andrews on 7 July, they wondered whether their inability to arrange a meeting with Paul Murphy today was deliberate on our part. She thought that it would be of the utmost importance to stay close in the period ahead. \* See below for

I said that it was true that confidence had been dented by the handling of the Police Commission and the failure to consult adequately on the prisoners legislation. But she should not exaggerate. The Taoiseach had written to the Prime Minister outlining our views, and it was important that we explain frankly our concerns. This itself was a sign of the maturity in the relationship. (Mowlam incidentally could not recall the letter, but she put this down to the fact that she sees too many papers). I emphasised that the key thing for the future was that we be consulted properly on initiatives which lay at the heart of the process. The Irish Government could not be seen to be wrong footed on matters of such importance. As for meetings between Ministers I said that there were no problems on our side and Ministers were available as in the past,

*\* - Minister of State seeing Paul Murphy on Wednesday;  
- Minister meeting for 15th in hall for private overview  
in early PM;  
- Will be away here on Thursday for further implementation of  
Commitment process*

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**Source 3 - Extracts from a letter from the Irish Ambassador in London to Dermot Gallagher, a senior official in the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ireland June 1998**

18/06/98 10:51 01719286868

SECURE FAX TRANSMISSION  
IRISH EMBASSY -->0035314757822

Pg. 02

2

... especially if urgent matters needed discussion.

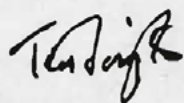
Mowlam said she was reassured by what I said and put her concern down to tiredness and congenital paranoia.

The discussion then touched on some issues of current concern.

Comment

I think our concerns about consultation have registered. When I met Blair in Downing Street on Saturday the first thing he said was that he knew that we were "sore" over the Police Commission and the prisoners legislation. He tried to justify their proceeding on both issues by pointing to the need to support Trimble and maximise the pro-Agreement vote within the UUP - "without that everything will fail." I said that our main point was not that they had gone ahead but that they had failed to consult adequately and that problems could be avoided if both sides discussed issues at an early stage. He acknowledged the point.

Yours sincerely,



Ted Barrington  
Ambassador

## Source 3 - Transcript

AMBASAIÐ NA hEIREANN. LONDAIN  
IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

17 Grosvenor Place  
SW1X 7HR  
18 June 1998

Mr. Dermot Gallagher  
Second Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Dublin 2

Dear Secretary,

Conversations with Mo Mowlam and Tony Blair

Mo Mowlam telephoned me late last night. She said she was concerned at what she saw as emerging difficulties between the British and Irish sides; her feeling was that things were "different" in recent weeks and that there was not the same level of trust between us as before. As an instance of this she wondered whether that British Ministers were having some difficulties in arranging meetings with the Irish side. Although she herself would be seeing Minister Andrews on 7 July, they wondered whether their inability to arrange a meeting with Paul Murphy today was deliberate on our part. She thought that it would be of the utmost importance to stay close in the period ahead.

I said that it was true that confidence had been dented by the handling of the Police Commission and the failure to consult adequately on the prisoners legislation. But she should not exaggerate. The Taoiseach had written to the Prime Minister outlining our views, and it was important that we explain frankly our concerns. This itself was a sign of the maturity in the relationship. (Mowlam incidentally could not recall the letter, but she put this down to the fact that she sees too many papers). I emphasised that the key thing for the future was that we be consulted properly on initiatives which lay at the heart of the process. The Irish Government could not be seen to be wrong footed on matters of such importance. As for meetings between Ministers I said that there were no problems on our side and Ministers were available as in the past, especially if urgent matters needed discussion.

Mowlam said she was reassured by what I said and put her concern down to tiredness and congenital paranoia.

The discussion then touched on some issues of current concern.

Comment

I think our concerns about consultation have registered. When I met Blair in Downing Street on Saturday the first thing he said was that he knew that we were "sore" over the Police Commission and the prisoners legislation. He tried to justify their proceeding on both issues by pointing to the need to support Trimble and maximise the pro-Agreement vote within the UUP - "without that everything will fail." I said that our main point was not that they had gone ahead but that they had failed to consult adequately and that problems could be avoided if both sides discussed issues at an early stage. He acknowledged the point.

Yours sincerely,

Ted Barrington Ambassador

## Source 4 - Extracts from a letter between the UK Prime Minister's Office and the Northern Ireland Office, October 1998.

### Context notes

This letter was written in October 1998, by the Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, a very senior figure in the UK civil service. He had been talking to David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, the largest Unionist Party in Northern Ireland at that time, about the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF), a Loyalist paramilitary organisation whose activities were causing concern. In the course of the conversation, they had talked about several other issues as well. The letter is reporting Trimble's views to a colleague in the Northern Ireland Office.

### Questions

#### Content

1. According to this account, did Trimble seem happy with the morning session of the meeting he had? Explain your answer.
2. Why was the afternoon session less successful?
3. What did Trimble want to happen?
4. Why would this be a problem for the Irish government?

#### Inferences from the Content

5. Would historians infer from this document that the meetings were going well, badly or somewhere in between? Explain your answer.

#### Inferences from the Context

6. What inferences could a historian make from the fact that the meetings were happening at all?

#### Lines of Argument

Which line(s) of argument A-E could use this document as supporting evidence?



# Source 4 - Extracts from a letter between the UK Prime Minister's Office and the Northern Ireland Office, October 1998.

31-OCT-1998 10:38 FROM No 10 CONFIDENTIAL FILING TO  
CONFIDENTIAL

P.01



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

SECRETARY OF STATE  
378 / 115/98

From the Principal Private Secretary

29 October 1998

AS/SCS BAL  
AS/HR Murphy BAL  
AS/HR Ingram BAL  
AS/PLA BAS  
AS/HR Sampo MR Hill  
MR Williams  
MR Sampo Jeffrey  
MR A. [unclear]  
MR Leach

Dear Nick,

## ALL PARTY MEETINGS, 29 OCTOBER: TRIMBLE'S VIEWS

When I spoke with Trimble about the LVF, I took the opportunity to ask him about today's meetings. Trimble confirmed that the morning session on departmental structures had gone well, and had resulted in a focussed discussion. Eleven key points of difficulty had been identified, but many of them were simply a question of making decisions.

In contrast, the afternoon session had been messy. Many of those around the table did not understand the distinction between areas of cooperation and implementation bodies. They had wanted to transfer functions to implementation bodies, and retain them at the same time. Part of the problem had been that, perhaps because of the presence of Sinn Fein, the SDLP had raised their sights. This did not make things any easier. So the meeting had been unsatisfactory. They had ended up with a list of areas where more technical work was needed.

Trimble said that he hoped that they could have a more focussed meeting on Monday involving the UUP, SDLP, Irish and British. I said that I did not think the Irish and the SDLP would be keen on this format, because of their desire to be inclusive. Trimble claimed to be unaware of this difficulty. He was willing to make some side arrangement to keep Sinn Fein involved but he could not attend a meeting with them but without the DUP. He added that, when he had spoken to Ahern earlier in the week, Ahern had focussed on training and the Irish language, and had acknowledged that economic development was difficult for Trimble. Ahern had also promised to send a full list of possible implementation bodies, but this had not yet turned up. Finally, Trimble said that he had had discussions at the beginning of the day with Mallon. They had agreed that they should try to reach a private conclusion on the implementation bodies, but park this. They would say in public that they had not yet sorted this out, but were confident they could do so quickly, and use this to put pressure on Sinn Fein.

## Source 4 - Extracts from a letter between the UK Prime Minister's Office and the Northern Ireland Office, October 1998.

### Comment

We clearly need to work hard on Trimble to take a more positive line on North/South, and get across that the quadripartite meeting he has in mind poses huge difficulties for the Irish and the SDLP, if Sinn Fein are not there. I will try to get the Prime Minister to speak to him about this, probably over the weekend, and to encourage further all party meetings on North/South issues, or at least some alternative process to the same effect.

## Source 4 - Transcript

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

29 October 1998  
PS/SCSBAL  
PS/Mr Murphy Bal  
PS/ Mr Ingram BAL  
PS/All Bas  
PS/Mr Semple Mr Hill  
Mar Watkins  
Mr Jeffrey  
Mr McCabe  
Mr Leach  
Mr Walker  
Mr Scholfield  
Mr Bell

Dear Nick

ALL PARTY MEETINGS, 29 OCTOBER:

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### Comment

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## Source 5 - Extract from a report of a meeting between the Taoiseach and the UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in September 1998

### Context notes

This extract comes from the notes taken at a meeting between Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam. They discuss a wide range of issues, but these extracts focus on two issues. In section 3 they are discussing the challenges being faced by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party. Decommissioning meant the process of paramilitary groups giving up their weapons. The Shadow Executive was the term used for the new Northern Ireland devolved government before it officially took up its full powers. In section 13 the British-Irish Interparliamentary Body was an organisation formed in 1990. It was made up of 25 UK MPs and 25 Deputies of the Irish Parliament. They met to discuss issues of common interest and to promote understanding.

### Questions

#### Content

1. What does Trimble mean when he says he 'needs something'?

#### Inferences from the Content

2. What can a historian infer from the comment that Trimble needed RUC protection in parts of his own constituency.
3. What would you say was the attitude of Mo Mowlam and David Trimble towards the British Irish Interparliamentary body?

#### Inferences from the Context

4. What inferences could a historian make from the fact that this meeting between Bertie Ahern and Mo Mowlam was happening?

### Lines of Argument

Which line(s) of argument A-E could use this document as supporting evidence?



## Source 5 - Extract from a report of a meeting between the Taoiseach and the UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in September 1998

3. Turning to his meeting the previous evening with David Trimble, the Taoiseach said that Mr Trimble had made clear to him that his room to manoeuvre was very limited. He needed "something". He understood the argument about the text of the Agreement (not explicitly linking decommissioning to formation of the Shadow Executive), but it could equally be argued that such linkage was not ruled out. In any case, he was now stuck with the realities of the position in which he found himself. The Taoiseach commented to Dr Mowlam that there was no doubting the scale of Mr Trimble's political difficulties - as exemplified by the fact that there were parts of his constituency, previously strongholds of his, which he could now only visit with the protection of the RUC.

13. Dr Mowlam spoke warmly of the meeting of the British-Irish Interparliamentary Body which she had just attended in York. She noted that after an initial exchange on the current political situation, most of the day was devoted to "routine" matters, such as Agriculture, Education etc. She found this very heartening. The Taoiseach said that he had mentioned the Body to David Trimble at their meeting. The latter had agreed that we were in a new situation and that the Interparliamentary dimensions of the new institutions would also have to be developed.

## Source 5 - Transcript

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## Source 6 - Extract from a note by a UK government official on a meeting about cross-border bodies November 1998

### Context notes

Part of the Belfast Agreement of 1998 was the setting up of cross-border bodies – organisations which took responsibility for a range of issues across the whole island of Ireland. For example, the North/South Ministerial Council was established. The Council takes the form of meetings between ministers from both Ireland and Northern Ireland and is responsible for twelve policy areas. Six of these areas are the responsibility of corresponding North/South Implementation Bodies. For Unionists in particular, agreeing to these bodies was a massive step as it allowed for deeper cooperation with the Irish government on matters affecting Northern Ireland and Ireland. Trimble was the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party. Mallon was Seamus Mallon, Deputy Leader of the Social and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), the main Nationalist party at this time.

### Questions

#### Content

1. Who was meeting and where did they meet?
2. What areas of agreement were close?

#### Inferences from the Content

3. What can a historian infer from the activities described in this document?

#### Inferences from the Context

4. What inferences could a historian make from the fact that this meeting was happening?

### Lines of Argument

Which line(s) of argument A-E could use this document as supporting evidence?

**Source 6 - Extract from a note by a UK government official on a meeting about cross-border bodies November 1998**

FROM: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
11 MILLBANK  
LONDON  
SW1P 4QE

John Holmes Esq  
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 0AA

24 November 1998

*Dear John,*

**NORTH/SOUTH IMPLEMENTATION BODIES**

**State of Play as at 4pm on 24 November**

This note sets out the latest position on north-south bodies.

Good meeting between Trimble and Mallon on Monday, following up good meeting in Dublin on Friday. UUP and SDLP officials tasked to work on remaining areas of disagreement.

Irish paper on implementation bodies rewritten to take account of (most of) Friday's discussion, cleared with the SDLP and Sinn Fein yesterday and presented to UUP officials this morning.

**Close to agreement**

Inland Waterways; Food Safety; Language; Strategic Transport Planning; Aquaculture and Marine Matters; Tourism (latest Irish paper neatly addresses Trimble's concerns)



## Source 6 - Transcript

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
11 MILLBANK  
LONDON  
SW1P4QE

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Private Secretary to the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
24 November 1998

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