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PST

P.S.

MR. F. MURRAY

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Cancellor A-1

1. Mr. Trimble, who was accompanied by Mr. Jeffrey Donaldson, addressed about 40 invited guests at a reception/dinner here hosted by the Institute of Politics at the J.F.K. School of Government in Harvard. A guest list is attached for information.

2. In his opening remarks Mr. Trimble underlined the British Government guarantee that N.I. will remain part of the U.K., in line with the wishes of a greater number of the people of N.I. Within that context there was limited scope for governmental changes in N.I. He stressed the importance of decommissioning arms and promoted the UUP proposal for an alternative twin track approach to the current impasse with a debating assembly replacing the second track of all party talks. I attach in direct speech a full report of his remarks and the Q&A.

3. I spoke to Mr. Donaldson after the dinner and he was earnest in stressing the virtues of the UUP assembly proposal which, he said, they had kept deliberately vague to accommodate all parties. It was a way out of the present impasse and would allow vital trust to develop between the parties prior to all party negotiations.

end

David Trimble speaks at the Institute of Politics at the J.F.K. School of Government, Harvard, 2 November, 1995.

My principal objective in visiting the U.S. was to contact the administration. We had a very good meeting with President Clinton.

But I want to talk tonight about the principle of consent and the issue of the day - Decommissioning.

The Downing Street Declaration is not an agreed document. Some parts are Irish, some British and some joint. Para 4 is British. In it the British Government pledges to uphold the wishes of a greater number of the people of N.I. This is the democratic principle on which any agreement must be based.

In September a Dublin newspaper published a poll in association with Coopers and Lybrand which showed that only 14.7% of the people of N.I. wished to become part of a united Ireland. A Channel 4 News poll in February of 1995 showed that 22% of the people of N.I. wanted to be part of a United Ireland. A breakdown of that poll by political affiliation and religion showed that 23% of Roman Catholics wanted to remain part of the U.K. and 25% of S.D.L.P. supporters wanted to remain in the U.K. These findings were consistent with Queen's University findings in the 1992 General Election. This underlines the question of what people prefer. It is too easy to make assumptions and divide peoples into blocks to support those assumptions. Take a look at Scotland, the percentage of people that want independence from the U.K. is in the mid 30's. Nearly twice the number of people in Scotland want to leave the U.K. as in N.I.

The principle of consent guarantees that N.I. will remain part of the U.K. Within that context the scope for change is very limited. I have often spoken about how the mid range of local government has all but disappeared in N.I. What we want is a new regional government based on proportionality throughout the system. No political party is proposing devolution of any security or economic (tax) functions. Any future structure is going to involve limited local government. The current political debate ignores that dimension. People often talk of cross border bodies but the essential limitation on such bodies is financial. Money will not be given to local government if it is not accountable. We must engage in the real world. If we put all these factors together the scope for future negotiations is very limited.

The decommissioning issue is bogged down. Those who say that decommissioning is a new issue introduced after the ceasefire by Patrick Mayhew are talking piffle. That precondition was clearly signalled to SF in advance in the secret contacts with the British Government reflected in secret exchanges at that time. Look at para 10 of the DSD and its reference to exclusive peaceful methods. The IRA continue to recruit, train and research. Their arsenal is such that they cannot be considered to be committed to peaceful methods.

Why should they decommission before talks? Dick Spring gave the answer to that when he said there was no question of allowing people to enter talks on the basis that if they don't like the outcome then they resort to violence. Violence or the threat of violence is unacceptable. The Irish Government however has allowed itself to be intimidated in this regard.

We are not insisting that every weapon has to be decommissioned but we need the beginning of a credible process, not a token gesture but a procedure that will lead to liquidation. We have to see that beginning to show commitment to exclusively peaceful methods. The question we need to ask about the ceasefire is "Was it intended to be permanent?" Decommissioning asks the same question. We cannot be satisfied by verbal assurances. President Clinton in May said that the issue of decommissioning was the next step. We are assured by the President that he continues to remind SF of the need to decommission.

The President supports the British Government "twin track" initiative. We agree on the importance of a decommissioning track. We have no time for threats to end the ceasefire with references to "bodies on the street" or more correctly "blood on the streets" and that wasn't said by Adams or McGuinness but the implicit threat was made explicit nevertheless.

Against the background of stalemate and impasse we propose another way which is not an alternative to the twin track. A fresh electoral mandate for all the parties in N.I. is important. The UDP and PUP no less than the SF need a new mandate. We have to see their commitment to peaceful methods and democratic practices. What are they going to say about the future? An election to a new assembly would tell who could take part in future dialogue and what weight should be given to the various parties. The assembly could be limited in its scope and duration. It could make enquiries and reports into North South cooperation. It is not a substitute for decommissioning or negotiation. It could be a new version of the twin track approach. The decommissioning track would remain and the assembly would be the other track leading eventually to negotiations. There is keen interest in this idea in London and Dublin. The U.S. administration is also in the very interested category. We don't want to be stuck in the decommissioning impasse. Civil servants are looking around for new imaginative ideas but what we are proposing is a good way forward in the short term.

When eventually we get to negotiations however we will be up against the limitations I mentioned earlier.

end.

Q&A

Q. Can you talk further about devolved government and the need for carefully balanced local government structures?

A. We propose a local administration based on proportionality with administration by committee. I understand the difficulties that arise with proportionality. There are other countries in Europe with national minority problems and they have problems with proportionality because at the end of the day the greater number will prevail. Therefore vital interests need to be protected. We need to look at a Bill of Rights. I am sorry this cannot be introduced in the context of N.I. alone but must be a part of U.K. law. This was explored in 1992 as part of the constitutional talks and a report was drawn up but never adopted because John Hume didn't agree. There are also other precedents for the protection of minority rights. e.g. Council of Europe Conventions, the OSCE, the Charter of Paris and the Vienna Accords. All of course are not appropriate to N.I. but we said in 1992 that we would look at these standards and see how best we could cooperate. The S.D.L.P. and the Dublin Government don't want to talk to us about these matters. They understand proportionality as power sharing as in 1973. That in our eyes is a model for minority rule.

Q. I understand decommissioning is essential to remove the threat of a return to violence but can you not see some way to delink decommissioning from negotiations that are held hostage by the threat of a return to violence?

A. The whole peace process is predicated on the assumption that the IRA have recognised the futility of violence. We do not know if that presumption is correct. Commitment to peaceful methods is the litmus test. Look at the official IRA ceasefire in 1972. They immediately changed their policies and their language although they held on to some arms to protect Worker's Party rackets. The British Government has given SF/IRA time to embrace peaceful methods. But the IRA army still exists. The Government has committed itself firmly to the precondition of decommissioning. If there is a resolution it is going to be very obvious who blinked. Our suggestion of an assembly might make it easier to focus on other things.

Q. I can't think of one international conflict where the issue of disarming was a precondition for negotiations. Indeed many negotiations take place without even a ceasefire between the combatants. Have you developed any strategy to win the minority over to your viewpoints?

A. First of all we are talking about a mature democracy where a small portion of the population is engaged in terrorism. The analogies with other international conflicts are not appropriate. Support for old style nationalism is declining. More and more people are coming to recognise that the union is the best solution for everyone.

Q. Can you talk about the role of external actors, i.e. the U.S. and the E.U.?

A. Some parts of the Irish American community have identified themselves with militant republicanism and actions by U.S. administrations have not always been helpful. We are trying to help the U.S. to be evenhanded. The EU also wants to be helpful and they have made some 300 million ecu's available for various programmes only some of which will be well spent the rest will be badly spent on heritage centers at every street corner. The IFI spend their money in an outrageously discriminatory way.

Q. The idea of a threat of violence hanging over all party talks without agreement on decommissioning seems to me a fantasy. It is an issue of no cost to the Unionists and the nationalists could never use it effectively without losing support in their own community.

A. I agree that the threat of violence would result in a very negative reaction but symbolic actions are important. Confidence within the Unionist community is vital.

Q. What about the DUP. They will have nothing to do with the current peace process.

A. Our actions will not be dictated by the DUP but we want to get them involved. Our assembly initiative will bring them in. They have 50% higher electoral support than SF. We also don't want our support leeching out in their direction.

end.