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**SECRET**

**DRAFT (not seen by Taoiseach)**

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P. Teahon  
F. Murray  
T. Dalton

**Phonecall between the Taoiseach and  
the British Prime Minister  
at 7.15 p.m. on 2 October, 1995**

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[This is a summary not a transcript of the conversation].

P.M. I see you met the unionists today. How did it go?

T. I would like to tell you about that and also about a long meeting I had with Gerry Adams last Friday. There seems to be some slight movement on the Sinn Féin side. Let me have a look at my notes.

P.M. I am very annoyed with the front page report in the Irish Times this morning. (He then read extensively from the report, a copy of which is attached). It doesn't help me to have reports which say that Washington is exerting pressure on Downing Street.

T. Frankly, I haven't seen the report. I don't waste a lot of my time reading newspapers. I just don't know what their sources are. All I can say is that anything which passes between you and me is kept to a very small number of people.

P.M. Trimble seems to be committed to the twin track approach.

T. My discussions with him today were good. I can't say whether or not he is committed to the twin track approach. Our discussion wasn't in those terms. He was intent on establishing that well before the ceasefire, as far back as the Downing Street Declaration discussions, verifiable decommissioning was established as being part of the package. The UUP had backed the Downing Street Declaration only because they had been told that it involved decommissioning. That may not have been the precise word used at the time but Trimble said the package could not now be changed. He went on to say that decommissioning was the essential entry

price which Sinn Féin/IRA would have to pay to be admitted to all-party round table talks. The British Government could not deliver the UUP. The party would speak for themselves. They needed to see action to match words. Trimble had said that he was not exclusively tied to the gesture and he did not rule out some other way for Sinn Féin/IRA to meet the Downing Street paragraph 10 requirement. He did not have specific alternatives to the gesture. Ken Maginnis had said that they needed a signal that the war was definitely over. Ceasefires were of little value. They had had ceasefires before, for example from 1962 to 1969. Only movement on disarmament would convince unionists that the war was over. We didn't discuss Trimble's idea for an elected Northern Ireland assembly. Trimble had made it clear privately that this was an internal Northern Ireland matter.

P.M. That's the idea we are currently working on. It could be tacked onto the other things.

T. There are many questions that need to be answered first before moving with the idea of an elected assembly. In my meeting with Gerry Adams, he was initially very negative about the idea but agreed to give it some

further thought when it was pointed out to him that we were not talking about an assembly in the narrow context indicated by Trimble.

P.M. The SDLP will be infinitely more difficult and negative. John Hume personally wrecked the 1992 talks. He has a hang-up about elections to a negotiating body.

T. If an election took place now, the SDLP would seriously lose vote share. Maybe we should look at ways around that problem. Could we devise a list system of elections where SDLP and Sinn Féin could have a joint list?

P.M. Those two parties and, indeed, Hume and Adams are very close. The two go back a long way. Where are you going by the way?

T. Madrid, in preparation for our EU Presidency next year. Don't worry, I won't be making any statements about Sterling or EMU. Let me tell you about my meeting with Gerry Adams. It looks as if Sinn Féin have accepted the twin track approach and that they are now prepared to buy into an international commission. They have gone through the process with the IRA. While the IRA's statement on Saturday seems to say that there could be no surrender of weapons until everything was agreed,

Adams alerted us in advance to the possibility that while that was one interpretation, another view would allow some decommissioning to take place during a talks process. The progress is that Sinn Féin have now accepted the twin track approach and are prepared to co-operate with the commission provided they see it functioning as a political body. They have difficulties with some of the detailed terms being bandied about but these could probably be overcome. The unionists unfortunately have a strong view that the commission should be both a political and a military body and there could be problems reconciling those positions.

P.M. The unionist position hasn't shifted and it won't shift. It is a solidly based position. Trimble is intellectually committed to it and, in addition, it's what the grass roots supporters of the party are saying. There has to be some form of decommissioning. Even if there is a gesture, it is not certain that that would be enough to bring the unionists to the table. How long will you be away?

T. Until Friday.

P.M. Trimble came over for a very long chat with Rod Lyne on Saturday morning. In two hours, he didn't shift on decommissioning. He is not

going to shift. Do you know what came out of Trimble's meeting with Fianna Fáil?

T. No, but Bertie Ahern said in an interview afterwards that there would be no all party talks before Christmas. It looks as if the unionists are trying to string it out until after the Clinton visit. If they continue with that approach, the IRA position may not hold. We can't expect it to hold indefinitely.

P.M. There are three or four ways through the present situation but, unfortunately, every single one of them is blocked by someone. That is a very uncomfortable position. We'll have to have a way through. I'll meet Hume and the unionists as soon as I can to see if we can move it in any way.

T. Is there any possibility that we could substitute political judgement for a decommissioning gesture? You might remember we discussed it in Majorca. Do you see it as offering a way forward?

P.M. I like the idea. It's elegant. I've been thinking about it but it is difficult to see it working. The unionists will continue to insist on a gesture as a

precondition and that being the case, Sinn Féin/IRA won't co-operate. We need to soften the edges a bit before we attempt to put the twin track approach up front again. We mustn't despair. But what about the unionists? It is good news that Taylor seems to be going everywhere with Trimble. I'll try to find a way through with them. It won't be easy. Trimble's own instincts are to insist on serious decommissioning before talks and he knows that his party fully supports him in this position.

T. I pushed the unionists a bit to discuss things with the SDLP as bluntly as they discussed them with me. I suggested that they should aim for broader discussions say six on each side rather than confining their conversations to Hume.

P.M. I am planning to see a joint SDLP/unionist delegation soon.

T. The two parties should be meeting more often and discussing politics.

P.M. I had a good meeting with Paisley and co. Did I tell you about that? It was infinitely better than anything I had with them before. It lasted for 1¾ hours. It was most productive even though I didn't shift them at all from



their line. They're on broadly the same lines as Trimble. They said they were there first. I think that's right.

T. But how do we get the SDLP on board?

P.M. We mustn't focus narrowly on Hume. We have to explain to them that what is being suggested is not a new Stormont. The unionists say that they need to have a new mandate if they are to sit down with Sinn Féin.

Paisley said that provided Adams was elected to the House of Commons, he would debate everything with him. The new assembly would be very different from the old Stormont. It could be elected on a list system. It could be numbers limited. All we need is to get the right people into the same arena with a legitimate mandate. We could build in an option to extend the time if progress was being made. It is the way.

T. There are a number of things we could begin to do. We could start Strand II talks now.

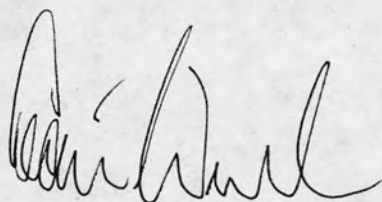
P.M. And we could use our Strand III ideas.

T. Yes, but Strand II is the important one for nationalists. And coming back to a negotiating assembly, not all its meetings need take place in Northern Ireland. Some could take place in London or in Dublin. Hume would find it very difficult to boycott an assembly which would meet in Dublin. We could have an independent chair, a committee structure, a limited number of people attending the plenary to reduce the talking. If we accept what is essentially a Trimble and unionist concept, its presentation and form would need to be tilted to make it acceptable to nationalists.

P.M. We'll see what we can work out. As I said, I'll be talking to the unionists and to the SDLP.

T. It's important that people shouldn't be asked to react to Trimble's proposal. It has to be something broader.

P.M. OK, I think that's alright. Thanks. Let's talk again next week.



Seán Donlon

3 October, 1995.