

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/51/576
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

re Drumcree
cc UVF.

Extract from Panorama, BBC 1, 9.30 pm, Monday 15 July 1996

Meeting between David Trimble and Billy Wright

Introduction by Peter Taylor
On Wednesday evening I was sitting here in the church hall, chatting with the Orangemen and their wives who were making sandwiches and cakes and endless cups of tea. There was no film crew with me at the time. At about 6.30, a worried looking David Trimble came into the hall. He went straight up the stairs behind me and into the room at the top. He was holding a secret dialogue, not only with the Orangemen, but certain individuals with strong connections to the outlawed loyalist paramilitary organisation, the Ulster Volunteer Force, the UVF. One of those key figures present was a Portadown loyalist called Billy Wright. Mr. Wright is a former loyalist UVF prisoner. At the bottom of the stairs stood some of Mr. Wright's friends, presumably there to discourage curious visitors. The meeting lasted for over an hour.

Int: Were you concerned about the reactions that Mr. Wright and his colleagues may have to the situation?

Trimble: Well, we were in a rather volatile situation there .... and we knew it was volatile.

Int: Might Mr. Wright have made it more volatile?

Trimble: We were very anxious that the paramilitaries would not break their ceasefire.

Int: Did you say that to Mr. Wright?

Trimble: I did, and we said that to the paramilitaries generally.

Int: What did you say to Mr. Wright about his responsibilities?

Trimble: We said we didn't want any violence.

****

Billy Wright: David Trimble was not in negotiation with me, but I am aware of what was required of, or what was being asked of, the loyalist community in Portadown, the price that was going to be extracted for the Drumcree parade to be allowed to walk and .... I have to say that basically, the fundamental issue was had anyone the right to demand who walks where.

****

Int: Why are you talking to someone that you would regard as a loyalist paramilitary former prisoner and terrorist?

Trimble: I've done that before. We are dealing with people who are on a ceasefire.

Interviewer: So why would Orangemen talk (sic) to former convicted IRA prisoners ... to try and solve the situation?

Trimble: The IRA ceasefire, you will notice, has ended.

cc'd. Pat Hennessy
Emb. Darlington

©DFA/2021/51/576

FOR: BRIGID BYRNE/EMBASSY, LONDON **FROM**: M. TIERNEY

DATE: 16 JULY 1996 **PAGES**: 2

re UVF.

Comments by Gerry Adams, BBC, Morning Ulster, 16 July 1996

Interviewer: Let's address this issue of David Trimble's meeting with Billy Wright at Drumcree Church last week. Do you accept his explanation for that, that he met with or had contact with Billy Wright and others in an attempt to do one thing and one thing only and that was to maintain the Loyalist ceasefire?

Adams: Well one can be sure that he wasn't talking to Billy Wright about the safety of Catholics in the Garvaghy Road area or indeed in that Mid Ulster area. But let me say this, I have no problem with David Trimble talking to Billy Wright. What I have a problem about is the way he tells lies, that he says on the one hand he will not talk to others on the basis that they have had previous convictions and he will not talk to residents associations and he will not talk to Sinn Féin even during an IRA cessation. You see here that he's using flags of convenience to prevent meaningful talks because Mr. Trimble, I'm afraid to say, is not interested in accommodation but only in domination, and here you see him walking out of incomplete talks last week, orchestrating the campaign of mass intimation and all that went with it and now he proceeds to walk back into talks this morning and more frightening is that he's going to be welcomed back with open arms by Patrick Mayhew while those who voted for Sinn Féin are locked outside.

Interviewer: But these are all decisions which he has to make and only David Trimble can make them, and a point I put to John Alderdice, who was also being critical of David Trimble earlier on the programme, is that he receives a great deal of support as leader of

©DFA/2021/51/576

the largest party in Northern Ireland for his position from his party members, from voters and from members of the Orange Order?

Adams: Well, I've already made it clear that I have no problem with him talking to Billy Wright. My position is that everyone should be talking to everyone. My problem with David Trimble is that he uses flags of convenience, that he refuses to engage in meaningful discussions that instead of behaving like a political leader who wants to bring about some sort of forward momentum here and some sort of agreement between the people of this island, that he acts in the exact opposite position, that he goes to Drumcree, he calls upon people to muster there, he patently breaks the law and then he expects to lecture others about democracy and about the righteousness of his position. Of course he has a position, he's the Head of a political party, of course he has support for that but that does not mean that he can trample over the rights of other people with impunity.

END.

©DFA/2021/51/576

FOR: BRIGID BYRNE/EMBASSY, LONDON **FROM**: C. O'SHEA

DATE: 16 JULY 1996 **PAGES**: 3

Comments by David Trimble, 16 July 1996

re Drumcree
& UVF

Trimble: Well I was at Drumcree, as you know, it is in my constituency with the Portadown Orangemen. He's a prominent Loyalist in the area. He came to Drumcree and I couldn't very well avoid bumping into him while there. What I did say to him was that we wanted no violence at Drumcree and I got assurances from him that he would do what he could to ensure that there was no violence and, of course, I discussed the need for the Loyalist ceasefire both there and generally to be maintained. While that ceasefire was dented last week, it has not been broken, and I very much hope that it will not be broken.

Interviewer: When you say dented does that include the possibility that the murder of the taxi driver, Mr. McGoldrick, could be down to the UVF or do you mean more generally the violence?

Trimble: Generally the violence. There's also the possibility that the appalling murder of Mr. McGoldrick - no Loyalist organisation has claimed responsibility or admitted, I should say, responsibility for it - but there is a general supposition that it had been committed by a Loyalist organisation or by a splinter group or by an individual.

Interviewer: Presumably you spoke to Billy Wright because you wanted to try to save lives. Would you not apply the same principle to talking to Gerry Adams or Gerry Kelly or Martin McGuinness?

©DFA/2021/51/576

Trimble: Well I think there are some quite significant distinctions in this. Yes, of course, in the very unusual and I hope exceptional circumstances last week I felt that what I said to him might have had, and I think it did have some effect in preserving peace in that area and that's important. But with regard to the other comparisons you make, first of all let's bear in mind that the organisation that Mr. Wright is alleged to be associated with is on a ceasefire. His political representatives are taking part in the inter-party talks where all the other parties are quite happy to talk to them. Representatives of Sinn Féin/IRA, they're not on a ceasefire.

Interviewer: There's been six months between the 12th of July last and the 9th of February this year when the IRA were in the ceasefire, there was an opportunity to talk to Mr. McKenna?

Trimble: Well at that time, as you know, the approach that we adopted with regard to Sinn Féin/IRA was that until we were satisfied that they were committed to that ceasefire in permanent terms and had demonstrated the commitment, we were not prepared to engage in talks with them.

Interviewer: As you are aware, the police in London made a very significant arms find yesterday, that could have killed a lot of people. If you could prevent lives being lost by talking to Gerry Adams would you do it, remembering that you spoke to Billy Wright on those terms?

Trimble: I didn't speak to him on those terms, the situation is quite distinguishable. The IRA are not on a ceasefire, they have not committed themselves to the Mitchell principles, they are not participating in the inter-party talks which is the case with regard to the other organisation and accepted by all the other parties and by the two Governments.

Interviewer: The Prime Minister condemned both sides in Garvaghy but he's also made it clear that he wants to look to the future and he wants to move from procedural to substantive talks, are you ready for that?

©DFA/2021/51/576

Trimble: What I think might be considered is something to try and rebuild a degree of confidence and willingness to cooperate amongst the principal parties where it really counts and I suggested yesterday and again this morning to the Secretary of State that rather than the Prime Minister seeing parties leaders individually, as was indicated in the statement yesterday, he should consider calling in the leaders of the four principal parties, those involved in the 1992 Inter-party talks. He should call them together at a meeting chaired by himself in which we could see whether there's a means of carrying this process forward in a realistic way.

END.

©DFA/2021/51/576

FOR: BRIGID BYRNE/EMBASSY, LONDON **FROM**: M.

DATE: 16 JULY 1996 **PAGES**: 1

NA UUP
cc Dunwoody

Comments by Seamus Mallon, BBC Radio Ulster, Good Morning Ulster, 16 July 1996

Mallon: The Tánaiste is meeting with the Secretary of State today, I believe it is, there will be an Intergovernmental Conference later in the week, I understand Thursday. We will be meeting the Chairman of the talks process, Senator George Mitchell, today and I think there will be a common thread in all of those meetings and the common thread will be twofold. First of all, how can anyone deal with a situation and with a Government which in effect allows a challenge to its own authority, not just in terms of the authority of the administration itself, but the challenge to law as was seen on the streets of the North of Ireland for one whole week, that's the first element and the first section of it. The second section is how can we get a situation to improve in the negotiating situation where the Unionist parties have for one whole month prevented any advancement to the substantive negotiations through their wrangling in terms of rules and procedures in circumstances where the two Governments in terms of the 6th June docun[illegible]had prepared rules and procedures and had also prepared ground rules that were published in a Royal Command Paper 3232.

Interviewer: What about those revelations on the Panorama programme last night that David Trimble met with leading Loyalist Billy Wright but wasn't prepared then to go on and talk to Brendan McKenna?

Mallon: Well I think it's absolutely astounding that Mr. Trimble should find himself in the same building as the same gentleman that you have specified. I find it even more astounding that he went off privately to a room within that building with that person.

END. 6125.wpd

©DFA/2021/51/576

re Drumcree
cc [redacted]

AERTEL: Trimble Explains Wright Talks - No Inconsistency

Ulster Unionist Leader David Trimble has said he sees no inconsistency between his talks with a convicted loyalist paramilitary leader and his refusal to meet a convicted republican. David Trimble told BBC Radio Ulster this morning that his talks with Portadown Loyalist Billy Wright took place "under exceptional circumstances." He said that to have ignored Mr Wright's presence would have been irresponsible as he was trying to impress upon him the need to maintain the loyalist ceasefire.

The SDLP and the Alliance Party are among those who have criticised Mr Trimble's "apparent inconsistency" in talking Mr Wright.

The Tánaiste has said Mr Trimble's role at Drumcree is likely to be raised at this afternoon's multi[-party talks.

Press Section
16 July 12 pm

©DFA/2021/51/576