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FOR: M BROWNE/EMBASSY, LONDON

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Comments by Sam McCrory, leader of UDA in Maze Prison, BBC Radio Ulster, 5 o'clock News, 5 January 1998 re UDA prisoners withdrawal of support from the Stormont talks

When asked if they were saying to the UDP if they should withdraw from the talks:

McCrory: No we have a consultation with the UDP and the leader of our organisation tomorrow morning and we will be giving directions then and recommendations. We will also have a discussion about this.

Interviewer: What is the prisoners position on the ceasefire?

McCrory: It's not a vote against peace or for peace, it's against the process as a whole. We find there is too much pandering to Sinn Féin/IRA and the men are basically just dismayed at the way the British Government has been treating Loyalists and Unionism as a whole.

Interviewer: But does this vote make the ceasefire any more shaky, any more fragile in your opinion?

McCrory: It's shaky as it is, so I would say yes, it probably is more shaky. The sooner we have this discussion, the more light we will be able to shed on the ceasefire.

Interviewer: And what will the prisoners be saying to the leadership about the ceasefire?

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McCrorry: We want peace so we want to send a clear message to the Government that we don't want to play second fiddle to Sinn Féin/IRA or any Republicans, we want to be treated equally. If they are going to give concessions to Republicans, they will have to give them to Loyalists also.

Interviewer: If the leadership on the outside was to take the decision to end the ceasefire, is that something the prisoners would support?

McCrorry: We would support it 100%

Interviewer: So are you saying that there is that possibility that the ceasefire could end.

McCrorry: Anything is possible.

Interviewer: In a sense couldn't it be argued that the prisoners are holding this process to ransom?

McCrorry: No, no that's not the case. We've always backed the process, it's just now people seem to lose faith in it.

Interviewer: And what are you saying should happen, are you looking for releases or are you looking for something more than releases?

McCrorry: We're looking to be treated equal, we want to be treated equally, like Sinn Féin. If Sinn Féin/IRA are getting concessions from the British Government, the Loyalist and Unionist community should be gaining concessions from the British Government. We have one Government telling us there are no concessions and then they are releasing the Republican prisoners and there's another Government saying there are no concessions and they start pampering Republican prisoners.

Interviewer: You mentioned that 70% of prisoners no longer have faith in the talks process. When you meet this delegation from the UDP tomorrow could your mind be changed?

McCrorry: I don't know, it all depends, it wouldn't only be the UDP, it would have to be the leadership of our organisation.

Interviewer: The leadership of the paramilitary organisation?

McCrorry: Yes, they would have to tell us what way they stand.

Interviewer: The ball, as far as you are concerned has moved to another court now, it's now with your paramilitary leadership and not with your political leadership.

McCrorry: Yes.

END