

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Confidential

Discussions on Drumcree at Downing Street, 14 May 1999

1. At the conclusion of the main talks on the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement at Downing Street last Friday, David Trimble asked for a discussion on Drumcree. In opening the discussion, Trimble emphasised the importance of a resolution of Drumcree for his own political position, and said that he had drawn up an outline list of the elements of a possible agreement (this was circulated at the meeting but was subsequently collected; however, a copy is attached).

2. Trimble argued that there was little time to reach an agreement, given that Harold Gracey, the leader of the Portadown Orange, was going away next week for ten days. He envisaged the process of agreement beginning with a series of visits to both sides by Séamus Mallon and himself, meeting the residents on the Garvaghy Road and the officers of the Portadown Lodge in the Drumcree Rectory. He would have preferred to hold the latter meeting in the Orange caravan on the site, but felt his own safety might be at risk there. It would be helpful if Gerry Adams could join them for the Garvaghy Road part of the visit.

3. The Trimble/Mallon visits would be followed, in the Trimble scenario, by the British Prime Minister asking both sides to meet under his chairmanship. Trimble insisted that the Portadown Orange would only agree to such a meeting in the knowledge that agreement would emerge from it. This agreement, which would be announced at the end of the meeting, would have six main elements (see list attached for details). These would include a major socio-economic package; the calling off of all Orange protests; the

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establishment of a Community Forum; the early completion of the 1998 Orange parade; the establishment by Trimble and Mallon of an Equality Advisory Committee, to include Breandán Mac Cionnaith; and a guarantee that the annual Drumcree parade be allowed to take place subject to "relevant sensitivity restrictions".

4. Mallon argued that the Trimble paper seemed to have decided on the details of the deal before the actual consultation process involving himself and the First Minister had got under way. He could not be a party to a pre-ordained process, though he would be happy to accompany Trimble to meetings with both sides.

5. Adams, in much the same vein, said that the paper was in effect asking the residents to agree to the Orange demands. Moreover, inviting Mac Cionnaith to serve on an Equality Advisory Committee smacked of "almost buying him off". Trimble replied that his use of the title "Agreed Outcome" in the paper was misleading - what he was talking about was the elements of a possible package.

6. The Prime Minister suggested that Trimble meet Frank Blair to talk through the elements of a possible package. Trimble said his worry was that if we didn't get agreement soon, the situation could spin out of control. Drumcree had the same capacity to destroy the Good Friday Agreement as the Ulster Workers Strike in the case of Sunningdale in 1974.

7. In reply to Mallon's query about the reference to the Parades Commission in the document, Trimble said that the intention was that the talks would be with all concerned, including the Commission.

8. Adams worried that the proposed visits to the area would be "huge news",

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and that it might be better to invite the parties to a private location. Trimble, in response, said that he had the feeling from the residents that "symbolism" was important and that, therefore, they would welcome visits of this kind. Adams said it was out of the question for him to go to the Garvaghy residents with a proposal that a parade would be going down it within a few days. Mallon added that he was certainly not going to go on the basis of any pre-determined plan.

9. The Taoiseach, referring to the acute impasse at Drumcree over many years, paid tribute to the efforts of David Trimble to move the process forward. Trimble, in expressing appreciation for the Taoiseach's encouragement, said he needed "to get his head round" the approach in his paper some more. Once he did this, he would talk to Séamus again. He emphasised, however, that he could not deliver the Portadown Orange into talks in advance of a plan being effectively agreed. The Anti-Agreement forces were focussing on Drumcree, and some of the Portadown Orange officers were under a death threat for engaging with him. There was a great danger of a "ghastly summer" being ahead of them as, while there would not be 100,000 Orangemen at Drumcree, there would be 20,000 to 30,000 "headbangers" there.

DMG.

Dermot Gallagher
17 May 1999

cc PST, PSM, PSMS, PSSG,
Mr Teahon, Dr Mansergh, Mr Dalton
Ambassadors W & L, Joint Secretary

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Elements of Drumcree Outcome

Sunday

First Minister to meet with Portadown District Officers. Asks for help in resolving impasse.

First Minister (with DFM and G Adams ?) visits Garvaghy Road, ~~addresses residents~~, recognises past difficulties and social problems, asks for help in resolving impasse and tolerance of parade.

Monday

Prime Minister announces talks to resolve Drumcree. Asks both sides to meet him at Hillsborough on Tuesday.

Tuesday Wed a/te Dr.

Prime Minister arrives, talks commence with:

FM, DFM, G Adams

Church Leaders

Portadown District Officers

Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition

Parades Commission

Portadown District Officers
(PM asks Officers to meet with Coalition delegation with him (say 2+2))

Meeting of PM, District Officers, Residents

Outcome agreed and signed

Prime Minister holds Press Conference

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Agreed Outcome:

1. **At the Press Conference the Prime Minister announces agreement to resolve the Drumcree situation and announces a major socio-economic initiative for Portadown including a special element for the Garvaghy Road area.**

2. **All protests, rallies and support parades by the Orange and Residents are called off.**

3. **A Portadown Community Forum is established.**

4. **On Wednesday or Thursday Portadown District will complete its parade and senior representatives will immediately enter an inaugural meeting of the Community Forum.**

5. **First Minister and Deputy First Minister announce the formation of an Equality Advisory Committee to assist them. First Minister announces his intention to invite Cllr MacCionnaith to serve on the Committee.**

6. **The annual Drumcree parade is guaranteed to proceed subject to relevant sensitivity restrictions, and this to serve as the basis for future annual parades.**

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