

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Adams-Trimble Meeting, 9 March 1999

1. The meeting, which lasted about an hour and twenty minutes, had Adams and Trimble accompanied by their Deputies, Martin McGuinness and John Taylor. I was given a briefing on the meeting by David Lavery of Trimble's office, and by Aidan McAteer of Sinn Féin. Gerry Adams rang the Taoiseach directly to brief him.

McAteer

2. McAteer felt that Trimble was very much going through the motions at the meeting. It seemed to him that the objective of the UUP Leader was to be in a position to be able to say that he and his Deputy had a special meeting with Adams and McGuinness and had made every reasonable effort to reach an understanding on the decommissioning issue. He added that Trimble, surprisingly, seemed to be thrown somewhat by the Secretary of State's decision to defer activating d'Hondt to the end of the month.

3. The only positive outcome of the meeting was a decision by the two Leaders to try and get together privately in Washington next week, with John Taylor and Martin McGuinness also agreeing to have a private meeting in Belfast at much the same time. (The latter could be a very useful channel.)

Lavery

4. David Lavery, for his part, agreed that there was an element of going through the motions at the meeting. This was not helped by a doctrinaire and repetitive approach by Adams. McGuinness, on the other hand, took a more

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pragmatic line. Both yesterday, and at the recent UUP/Sinn Féin delegation meeting, the Unionists found McGuinness easier to deal with than Adams.

5. John Taylor spoke of the meeting subsequently as being fairly sterile. Trimble, however, felt it was helpful to what he described as the process of thickening and deepening the dialogue between the two parties. He thought it encouraging that he and Adams would be meeting in Washington, while their Deputies would get together in Belfast.

Downing Street Meeting

6. Lavery also mentioned that Trimble, Taylor and Empey would be meeting the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State on Thursday afternoon. There was no compelling reason for the visit, the main purpose being (a) to report directly to Blair on the meeting with Adams and McGuinness; (b) to help fill the vacuum between the 10th and St. Patrick's Day; and (c) to touch base with Downing Street in advance of the Washington visit. Lavery added that Trimble looked forward, after his return from Washington, to the intensive discussions which would be necessary to achieve a breakthrough before the end of the month.

Dermot Gallagher
10 March 1999

cc: PST; PSM; PSMS;
Mr. Teahon; Dr. Mansergh; PSSG; Mr. Dalton;
Ambassadors London and Washington; Joint Secretary;
Counsellors A-I

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