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18 MAY 1999

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1 ULSTER Talks

'NO GUNS, NO GOVERNMENT' SAYS TRIMBLE

By Melissa Kite, PA News

Northern Ireland First Minister David Trimble emerged from talks with colleagues today and insisted: No guns, no government.

The hardline message that the IRA must disarm came after more than an hour of talks at Stormont with his Ulster Unionist Assembly party about the latest formula put forward by Tony Blair to break the deadlock in the peace process.

Mr Trimble said the proposals were still on the table.

But his bottom line remained the same and he again demanded that the IRA decommission before Sinn Fein is allowed into a power sharing executive.

I have stated my position. It is consistent with the position I have stated throughout, from the Assembly elections until now. No guns, no government, he said.

Mr Trimble dismissed reports that he may be forced to resign as UUP leader if he accepts the proposals, which would see the nomination of ministers to a transitional executive, followed by a progress report from General de Chastelain on decommissioning.

Asked if he will be UUP leader in a month's time, Mr Trimble said: I certainly would like to be.

But the proposals by Mr Blair and his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern were inadequate and incomplete in their present form, he said.

His refusal to accept the plan, which was worked out after a marathon 10 hours talks session in Downing Street last week, was a major blow for the two prime ministers who had hoped the formula would pave the wave for devolution within weeks.

I hope that the matter will resolve itself satisfactorily, but because of the complexity it will take some time, Mr Trimble said.

A lot of the difficulties which emerged over the weekend were because people were trying to rush things.

The proposals never purported to be a settlement. The proposals last week were much more modest than the Hillsborough Declaration and they left a considerable number of loose ends.

It wasn't as comprehensive as Hillsborough and that is part of the

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reason
why they need to be teased out.

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SEEN BY TAOISEACH

To J. Powell
From D Trimble

The main problems with the Friday Paper

"issue of arms must be finally and satisfactorily settled"
Settled to whose satisfaction? Is there any question of a Devolution Order being made if we are not satisfied? The PM's said to me that this would not happen, but there is no relevant provision or procedure in rest of the paper.

"will do all they can to achieve"
Can this be strengthened? Can there be some reference to the obligation to decommission. Can the IRA be bound in in some way with the need to achieve?

"report on progress"
There is a need to define progress. Our view, confirmed by de Chastelain at Hillsborough, is that progress is actual decommissioning.

"appoint Ministers designate"
This is the big stumbling block. If Ministers are appointed they will be referred to as the executive even if they do not meet. Moreover the Civil Service will rush to embrace them: they will be making announcements, opening factories, schools etc, in advance of devolution.
It would be much better to use the Hillsborough formula. I believe that the UUP would accept that: the indications on Saturday were that they will not accept the formula in the Friday paper. Final paragraph to be amended to conform with Hillsborough formula.
Also needs to be clear that in the event of failure to achieve progress by 30 June we revert to the status quo ante. ; But so also Assembly may fall too.

"final date"
can it be made clear that in the event of failure "the process of the Agreement is at an end" as in PM's first draft, ie the prison release scheme ends too, Assembly dismantled, start again.

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Attn: Dr Mawhinney (Copied) Secretary of State Teahon

Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

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17 May 1999
Release: Immediate

Line from UUP on latest proposal to resolve decommissioning impasse

The UUP Leadership wishes to make it clear that it is committed to the full implementation of the Agreement. We recognise that it must be protected in terms of its democratic and moral integrity.

The Agreement specifies that all Parties, including those linked to terrorist organisations, must demonstrate their commitment to exclusively peaceful and democratic means. This means that there must be a credible and verifiable start to a process of decommissioning, before Sinn Fein can participate in government.

The Agreement and the Mitchell Report are crystal clear on this issue and those who signed up to the Agreement are obliged to implement it in its entirety.

Every aspect of the Agreement has been implemented or substantially progressed except for decommissioning. It is incredulous to expect that an Executive can set up whilst this issue has not been satisfactorily and finally resolved.

Points of clarification

The Ulster Unionist Party will not change its position on this matter now, during or after the European Election. This issue goes right the heart of the Agreement and to the commitments to peace and democracy that Government Ministers must abide by.

Additionally, the Ulster Unionist Party Leader did not present the Government's proposal as a final or agreed text to the Assembly members on Saturday. The proposal was incomplete and clearly insufficient in terms of clarity or substance.

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Letter to the Rt Hon David Trimble MP for signature by Jonathan Powell

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FRIDAY'S TEXT

I am writing in the Prime Minister's absence to respond to the five points which you put to me earlier today about the paper which emerged from Friday's discussions here.

I can confirm that the Prime Minister would not regard sufficient progress in implementing the Agreement as having been made for the purposes of moving the Devolution Order, unless there was a viable Executive with representatives of both communities to which powers could be devolved.

We will carry on talking to Sinn Fein about the terms in which they might be willing to express their commitments on decommissioning, but I doubt if they will be ready to amend the Friday paper itself at this stage.

I agree that judgements will need to be made about progress with decommissioning, in the light of the Decommissioning Commission's report towards the end of June. But I doubt if it will be possible for the current text to contain an agreed statement of what constitutes such progress. It does, however, note that the clear positions of the parties (including your own) are not prejudiced.

We will need to consult rapidly with the Irish Government and the Assembly parties, but - subject to such consultation - we would be ready to amend the fifth paragraph of the text on Hillsborough lines, and to make new Standing Orders accordingly. The paragraph would read:

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"In the light of the above commitments, the parties in the Assembly intend to proceed to appoint, under the d'Hondt procedure next week, those to take up office as Ministers when powers are devolved. If powers are not devolved by 30 June, these appointments would fall to be confirmed by the Assembly".

I can confirm that the Prime Minister regards 30 June as an absolute deadline for devolution.

JONATHAN POWELL

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10 DOWNING ST.
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff

17 May 1999

Dear David,

I am writing in the Prime Minister's absence abroad to respond to the points which you put to us earlier today about the paper which emerged from Friday's discussions here.

There appears to be a fundamental misunderstanding as to what the text we agreed on Friday, means. It is not supposed to be a resolution of the decommissioning issue. We cannot resolve it at present since you have made it clear that without a credible start to a process of decommissioning, there is no basis for you co-operating with Sinn Fein in an Executive; and Sinn Fein has made it clear that they do not accept prior decommissioning as a condition of entering the Executive. We cannot resolve this now.

These arrangements do not cover the same ground as Hillsborough. Their aim is far more modest. Instead they are an attempt to take a further step towards devolution without prejudice to the clear position of all parties on the decommissioning issue. The advantage of this step is that it puts a deadline on final agreement and it gives General de Chastelain the ability to make a report on decommissioning, time limited by 10 June, on the basis of which all parties can then conduct further negotiations. But it gives rise to no obligation on either side. If the worry of your members is that it means they cannot now escape devolution, if de Chastelain reports in a particular way, that is wrong. There can be and will be no devolution unless it is clear that there is a viable cross-community executive in waiting to which powers can be devolved. If there is not, we cannot go ahead. So the anxiety that your members are yielding up their negotiating position is wrong. On the contrary, it is expressly preserved. But it does allow us to have all-party agreement (1) that de Chastelain can now conduct intensive discussions and make a report: and (2) there is a time limit to it all.

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Incidentally, as you know, you said quite clearly to all concerned on Friday evening that you did not intend to call a shadow executive meeting. Subject to the views of other Assembly parties, we would be prepared to amend the standing orders on the lines discussed at Hillsborough, so that they would refer to "those to take up office as Ministers when powers are devolved" and that nominations would come to an end on 30 June if devolution had not occurred by that date.

It would be great mistake to pass up this chance of one step forward, albeit a modest one.

Yours ever

Jonathan

JONATHAN POWELL

The Right Honourable David Trimble MP

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