

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Transcript of Conversation between Taoiseach and British Prime Minister

Thursday 3 February, 20000

T: Hello

PM Hello Bertie

T: How are you

PM: Fine. I am just about to get on the train.

T: Tony, things are looking up a bit I think we are going to get significantly improved words.

PM: Right.

T: The only problem is that we have had to call off our security around the border, because Gerry Adams is literally driving around the different houses and our guys were getting in the way, so we have had to call them off and he has been driving around for some hours now literally going into houses and selling this which is not exactly very modern but it is how the world works in their family. We would hope in the next few hours that De Chastelain will be aware and will be able to tell Peter Mandelson precisely what is in this and the IRAs response to it.

PM: Bertie I have to get on the train, I will call you back in one second.

T: Hi Tony

PM: Hi Bertie

T: Tony, just where we were at, could you hear me there?

PM: Yes.

T: He thinks that is going to work OK but he has to go to them all before he says that. We think that will be another while, say around 5 O'clock. Now just what's happening in the meantime,

Sinn Féin have talked to De Chastelain and told him the game and the interlocutor (the IRA man) has also been in touch with De Chastelain to give him some of the later position. Now what we are insisting on, if De Chastelain makes this new report which will be significantly better _____ in our view, if De Chastelain gets this clear, which I think he will shortly, and is able to make this second far more significant report we are insisting that the IRA issue a statement saying that they agree with his report so that we are not left in a limbo. So not alone have they have been part of helping put the report together but that they issue a statement after the report comes out. Now we haven't got agreement on that bit yet. But I am insisting that when he issues his report that the IRA issue an unambiguous statement saying that they agree with what is in the report, because otherwise we keep going around in circles.

PM: Right. Now how do we handle, you see Peter has got to make his statement

T: He does, I accept that and I said that last night

PM: What he can do though is, he could say

T: By the way Tony just in case you thought it was any discourtesy to you I didn't go over, I think those guys wanted me to travel and then I was left here, so then I decided not to move, because it kept the pressure on them.

PM Bertie, that's fine and look you see what Peter can do is to say look there are urgent discussions and all the rest going on now and in any event _____ so he if knows what is coming up, he can

_____

T: I think you and I won't have any problems with this. We will still have the problem of trying to convince Trimble, but you know

PM: Is there a time-table in it?

T: The time-table is that it has to be finished by the mandate in the Agreement which is 22 May.

PM: It has to be finished by then?

T: It has to be finished by then. De Chastelain will actually say if this works right Tony, and if it doesn't work right, I am going home. But anyway, if it does work it will actually say that the Commission will say that it can complete its mandate as set out in the Agreement and I mean there is only one date in the Agreement. Their mandate ends on 22 May, De Chastelain is out of business on 22 May. So I have been insisting and my guys have worked very hard on this that it actually says the Commission believes that it can complete its mandate as set out in the Agreement, that is why I want the IRA to then issue a statement saying that they accept what De Chasetelain has said otherwise, people will be going around saying well do they accept that or do they not and then you will be onto Trimble and Trimble will say ah well this isn't definite and bla bla bla, so if we can get those words through De Chatelain's report and I have effectively agreed these words with both Sinn Féin and the IRA, now he has to sign off with all of the people if something might go wrong on that as something went wrong at Hillsborough as you remember at 6.00am. But taking that it doesn't, then they would issue a statement saying they accept that. So that's what I am trying to do Tony.

PM: Right. The question Bertie, obviously Trimble will ask me is when does it start?

T: What it will say on that is something like ------- the Commission urgently get on with their deliberations with the members of the IRA on the details of the arms and armament and modalities and on the time-frame.

PM: Right. Right.

T: But, but, the end of the paragraph will be that the Commission believes that it would complete that mandate by the date set in the Agreement.

PM: Right. Obviously what Trimble will say is well if I don't know when it is going to begin, how do I hang in there until May?

T: That is De Chastelain's

PM: Yeh but I mean obvious, if there is definite commitment and

T: The fact is at the moment all he has is the Sinn Féin commitment to decommissioning and the Sinn Féin commitment that they know nothing about where the guns are. In this he will be able to stand up in front of his people and say that he has the IRA saying that they put their arms beyond use, the IRA saying that they are for the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, that they remove the causes of conflict with everybody else that commitment to sustaining and enhance durable peace, that they will work with the Commission, that they want to see significant progress and that they are going to deal directly with De Chastelain on the modalities and the time-frame. And the Commission, their conclusion that they believe that they can complete their mandate in the Agreement, so I mean if he wants anymore than that, he must want cream on top of the jam.

PM: Yeh. Right. Well obviously you

T: He is on record himself the other day when he was on the radio when he was asked and when he was doing a relaxed interview, he said that the only words that would be treated as important would be that there was a clear promise of the republican movement to start decommissioning as soon possible.

PM: Who said that?

T: Trimble said it.

PM What just today you mean?

T: No he said it last Monday morning.

PM: Right.

T: Now he did say in that interview that even saying that it might not be enough, but he did say that. But in this, I mean, I would interpret that this is more than that because if this happens he has a commitment that the IRA are going to with De Chastelain, honour the commitments of the Good Friday Agreement.