

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Ms. Whelan DV 25,16
Thanks. This should have a date jump into the heading. 20.11.00

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN TAOISEACH, MR. BERTIE AHERN AND PRIME MINISTER, MR. TONY BLAIR.

TAOISEACH:
You're also extremely upset about what the European Commission are trying to do to FIFA in UEFA about trying to do away with the transfer market.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah.

TAOISEACH:
Are you aware about that stuff?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah.

TAOISEACH:
Well actually I'm just after having a meeting with them. I wasn't really aware of it, but apparently the Commission are trying to do away with the whole system. There is war going on apparently.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah, its absolutely crazy ... power and half power below division clubs.

TAOISEACH:
Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
They depend on getting the money from the transfers.

TAOISEACH:
And the Commissioner Monti or someone.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Its a classic.

TAOISEACH:
Anyway we'll.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Some Russell guy who plays golf is taking up the issue.
? Brussels

TAOISEACH:
It could be a nice political one for you and I to try and save.

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PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Absolutely. We should do something on that, I've been sort of raising it and Shroeder is being

TAOISEACH:
Yeah he has mentioned it too. It would be certainly popular to be defending anyway

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah, quite right. We can join forces on it.

TAOISEACH:
Your budget is okay?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Its fine.

TAOISEACH:
It went well anyway.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
We will probably, I think, see out all the protests and all the rest of it and even if we hadn't done it across the board, duty cuts or anything like that, I mean we have given them some help and basically they can bugger off now I'm afraid because they can't get anymore out of us.

TAOISEACH:
On to next business.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah.

TAOISEACH:
The North.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
I mean look this is what I think we got to try to do Bertie if its possible. I mean there is certain things that Sinn Féin want. Now Adams knows I've tried to do my best on things but I've had various problems and, on the other hand, I think he also understands that we can't do all these things unless, not merely are they going to re-engage with De Chastelain, but it has to be real and there has to be clear and regular reports that demonstrate real progress. Now, I think that we have to look at putting together, as ever, a sort of deal that involves all the major elements which will include resolving Patten, probably the promise of some amnesty legislation, seeing through these things like the Disqualification Bill and House of Commons stuff that we said we would do and more demilitarisation. There is a real problem with South Armagh for reasons that we know. But, anyway, I am looking at that personally to see what we can get done again there. Now those are things that we can do. But, we can't do them without losing Trimble unless there is something coming back from the other side.

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TAOISEACH:
IRA re-engaging with De Chastelain.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah, then you know, on the basis that they really are going to move to a situation where the weapons are put beyond use. Now, I think they also - and Adams gave me some hint of this - that they were thinking creatively about how they would put some weapons beyond use and you see I don't know whether it wouldn't be possible for them actually to do something with the dumps now with those of them that have been inspected. They could do something that means that its more than just the dumps are left there, but that the weapons in them could be put beyond use in some way, probably. Now, another thing is obviously that as I said to Adams, there is a real problem if they carry on killing people every so often. You know it is quite hard to persuade Trimble that they are giving up violence when every so often some bloke gets bumped off.

TAOISEACH:
Yeah

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
And provided we can resolve Patten in a satisfactory way, I think it is also important that they advocate that young Catholics join the police service in Northern Ireland. So there is all these elements in it.

TAOISEACH:
Sure, Sure.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
What we've got to do is to try and put this all together. I think that the time is quite short as well.

TAOISEACH:
This day two weeks is the next North/South meeting

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
We got that coming up

TAOISEACH:
That involves Sinn Féin. And, of course, after that then you're into December and Donaldson will be off again. So, I mean, you know there really is only a few weeks.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah, so I think we don't have that long to get this thing done. It is also the case that you know, if we let this thing go into review we'll just loose it, I think.

TAOISEACH:
I know, a waste of space.

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PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
I think we've got to go and put this thing together. Now, one other dimension to this is a possibility of a visit by Clinton.

TAOISEACH:
Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Which I think he is keen to do.

TAOISEACH:
Yeah, I gather. I think the 13th or something like that.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Now, I'm not sure this time we couldn't actually get him actually to help us to resolve this. You see, if we go and do this stuff on Patten and amnesties and all the rest of it, more on demilitarisation, I mean there is a lot of pain in that for Trimble and actually there is quite a lot of pain in that for us to be honest. I do not fancy introducing this amnesty legislation, for various obvious reasons. But, if we had to do this, it would mean they just can't re-engage with De Chastelain and say we will do that. I mean there's got to be something sufficiently dramatic on their side, as it were, we are now solving the last bits of this.

TAOISEACH:
I spoke at lenght with Adams about this. Last Friday was our last meeting. He understands the reality of the situation and I presume he said the same thing to you on Tuesday. He said he is ready and is indeed determined to go back to the IRA, but needs some help on the kind of issues we mentioned, and in terms of decommissioning itself, I think we could reinforce, you know, the signal we sent at Hillsborough, that De Chastelain and the IRA representative should look creatively at what putting arms beyond use might mean in practice and that will encourage the IRA to enter into dialogue, once its re-engaged, whether its the existent dumps or whether its more things. And I think we could try and help in that and if necessary we should even change the regulations, if that's where they're going. You see, if we move straight from saying re-engagement with De Chastelain to saying handover guns, now that's not what anyone is saying. I think if we can work out what the hurdles are, and kind of say that this is the process and get into this. And Adams said to me any help we could give him on determining to a military expert what might the steps be, he'd be prepared to take them on board. I was very happy to hear that, because, I mean, I never thought that the agent would start talking to De Chastelain and then start talking about the guns the following month. But, at least if we knew that if there was an incremental move from A to Z, which would finally get us to where we want to get.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
I think that is absolutely right, that's what we got to do but its going to have to be something that really gives Trimble confidence.

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TAOISEACH:
Confidence, yeah well I have no difficulty and I've stated that. And I've said it and we shouldn't be around here hundreds of years doing it either. It will have to be something where there is movement.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
The question is what are the logistics of this? Because really, we've got to work out a package I guess haven't we?

TAOISEACH:
Well, you've put them the other way around but I think there are four elements. There is IRA re-engagement De Chastelain. There is OTRs, demilitarisation, and then there is Patten. So, there is not an awful lot of text to be written under the four of them. And I don't think there will be too much disagreement between yourself and ourselves. So what I thought was, as soon as is possible, and I spoke to Dermot earlier on this evening, and he is ready to either go tomorrow or the weekend or beginning of the week or whenever, to sit down with Jonathan or whatever other colleagues we need to start putting it together, because I think if we roll on without making some substantive progress before the next North/South meeting where Martin McGuinness is the one that's upfront and we're not into it at that stage - whether we're finished is another thing - but if we're not into at that stage, it will be very dangerous. Then if we roll on into, you know, Trimble is in a position he wants to know if we're resolving all of this stuff, rather than get himself into it, and to the load of difficulties, so we could have as much work done possible within the next week. And when Adams is back early next week, we could start trying to feed in stuff to him. I think we should try to do as much as possible as we can next week.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Okay lets.....

TAOISEACH:
Its all familiar ground

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
If you think about it, these are some of the last issues that need to be resolved really.

TAOISEACH:
Yeah, they are I mean Patten stuff, I think they're all only acknowledging we've made some progress but we're still stuck with flags, badges and you know.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
We're stuck with the retched flags and badges

TAOISEACH:
I know but anyway we can put our minds to them.

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PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
If we ditch Trimble on that, it would be very very hard for him, but on the other hand you know.....

TAOISEACH:
Well, even if there was a firm assurance that they'd eventually be done in line with Patten in the policing board, I mean, if we can get somewhere, lets discuss it anyway, its something we need to work out maybe at a private forum or something. I know the difficulty and I think we've used the last ten days showing we're not into sticking Trimble's nose in it, because that won't get us anywhere and I've shut-up everybody down here from talking about it even. We'll try to dig this out together.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Well in Trimble's psychology at the moment it is very good, his attitude to me when I met him yesterday was not I'm glad I did all this.

TAOISEACH:
Hmmm.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
His attitude was look I'm sorry this is the least I could do to get away.

TAOISEACH:
I'm sure.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
So he's not in the business of trying to create trouble, the fact is he bloody nearly lost.

TAOISEACH:
Yeah. The other part is on the administrative side. We're doing this. But, I think one way or the other, he has to try and I said this very clearly to Trimble last week and to Maginnis that they really have to find some way within their own party structure, or their own way that, you see, no matter what we agree, say we agreed a package on this and say we even get Trimble on side and Adams on side, Adams goes to the IRA and Adams gets the IRA on side, little wee Jeffrey, as they call him, will still be back in January saying that was all very interesting, now we want to monitor and we need a Council meeting to monitor to see if what was said has actually happened and if thats in line with the last UUC meeting. They are going to have to find some way of being at that because this guy just keeps on, you know, every time they have a meeting we spend a month getting over it and then we get a months peace and then in a month we're into it again. I don't know how they can do that but I just mention it. I said it to them. I think they really have to confront that. Particularly, for them, if they're into an election year next year. But anyway that's another thing, if we can get working on the package. But, I agree on the elements,Tony and I have no problem with those. The only other one actually you didn't mention there and its just, you know, this Real IRA designation in the US.

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PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah.

TAOISEACH:
Now I have no problem with that thing but the only criteria I think we must have is whether or not it would be operationally helpful that we don't give these guys a good public relations exercise. You know, instead of it being a good public relations exercise for us, it turns out to be a good public relations exercise for them. That they don't go around the Bronx, and all of these other places collecting their money, saying that we're even more an illegal organisation than the Provisional IRA ever were. The Provisional IRA were on the designated list of terrorist organisations, they weren't listed under other criteria in the US legislation. So its just a judgement by the people who deal with security. I don't give a damn about it quite frankly.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah, I totally agree that's the judgement to be made.

TAOISEACH:
It is to help them collect dollars because there are not going to collect much money in Ireland and they're not going to collect too much money in the United Kingdom. Its in the States, unfortunately, if they want to collect money.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
The question is, whether it helps or does it help.

TAOISEACH:
I'm not, quite frankly, in a position to call that. We have a difference of opinion on this between ourselves, like our Embassy in the United States say don't make these guys martyrs and give them more purposes to go around rattling their boxes and getting more dollars you know. But anyway, I'm prepared to look at that, if the lads got talking about it.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah absolutely.

TAOISEACH:
We have the arguments listed down. We have no problem showing what people are saying. I think Ronnie Flanagan and Pat are also looking at this issue and I've asked them to report to the two of us and tell us what they think. You know, let it be based on a security assessment rather than us getting ourselves upset about it.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Okay, as soon as Dermot is ready if Jonathan is,

TAOISEACH:
I'm sure Jonathan isn't waiting around doing nothing, so Dermot isn't either. But, he said he is ready to drop everything and go whenever you're ready Tony.

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PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Okay, lets get them together as soon as possible

TAOISEACH:
Yeah if they can ring each other. I'll tell Dermot. Maybe Jonathan will give him a buzz in the morning.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Okay we will do that and, incidentally, I just saw Ted Kennedy just now.

TAOISEACH:
Oh, how is he?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
He is fine.

TAOISEACH:
Happy?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
He sends his very best wishes to you.

TAOISEACH:
Re-elected?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah.

TAOISEACH:
For another six years. What do you think of the election?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Its bloody amazing isn't it.

TAOISEACH:
Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Its down to sort of a few hundred votes. Bush I think is pretty much bound to get it.

TAOISEACH:
Yeah, Bush will get it. But, it doesn't give him the strongest kind of position in the world, I suppose, starting off. But sure, a win is a win.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Yeah, absolutely.

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TAOISEACH:
Its a funny old system.

TAOISEACH:
Okay Tony.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Okay Bertie, all the best

TAOISEACH:
Be in touch.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
We will speak again after Dermot and Jonathan .....

TAOISEACH:
After they meet up.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Okay.

TAOISEACH:
Okay.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR:
Thats great, thanks, bye.

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