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TEXT OF CONVERSATION
ON
TUESDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 1995

T. Hello.

J.M. Hello John

T. Hello John. How are you?

J.M. Well I am fine ... but reeling actually. I have just had
an hours meeting earlier with John Hume and Seamus
Mallon.

T. Yes.

J.M. And I have just had an hour and three quarters with Ian
Paisley, Peter Robinson, ? Dodds and the Reverend
McCray.

T. You will want to take a deep breath after that.

J.M. I have had a very, very.....we are in a very conciliatory mode.

T. Really

J.M. Very conciliatory mode. Yes.

T. Very good.

J.M. How are things your side of the water this afternoon?

T. Fine really. I am very glad that we were able to agree a statement ... are you aware of this ... about the question of the two prisoners that ...

J.M. I certainly am aware ... it needed a lot of kicking.

T. Pardon

J.M. I said I am most certainly am aware it needed a lot of kicking ...

T. I am aware indeed that it did and I am very grateful ... I think it eased the situation considerably. This could have been ...

J.M. ... I think otherwise would have been very difficult ...

T. It could have been another rioting type situation and my impression is that ... well more than my impression ... I am pretty confident that there won't be a problem now. We have had some contact with those people and I think they are pleasantly surprised at the fact that we were able to make a statement of that nature. So that is very positive.

J.M. That is good. That is definitely good. Can I pick up some of the points....

T. Yes indeed. Yes.

J.M. On East West relations I have set things in hand at this end. We will run with this fairly quickly and we have put one of our most senior and best officials on to it ...

T. Yes

J.M. I hope to have some proposals fairly speedily...

T. Yes

J.M. I suggest then that the official concerned, Paul Lever, a very senior official.

T. Yes

J.M. And very amiable actually a good man to do business with.

T. Yes

J.M. I suggest he then goes to Dublin to discuss them with your colleagues.

T. Good

J.M. And so we will get on with that fairly quickly. I have put action in hand at getting advice on Irish Steel and on nuclear safety. All I have done is put action in hand I can come back to you as soon as maybe on that.

T. Yes indeed...

J.M. Those things are in hand.

T. Just on the first one before you go being stressed I mentioned that to all cabinet colleagues this morning and I am hoping that we will equally be a able to come to the table with ideas. I don't know what they will be at this stage. But I am glad to hear what you are saying.

J.M. Well I think we can ... I am quite confident we can produce something creditable and worthwhile. Creditable and useful but also worthwhile on its own account.

T. Yes.

J.M. Now lets move on. Thank you for the ideas I have had a look carefully at the ideas. I think we are close...

T. Yes.

J.M. ...to what we want to do in your written ideas. Hume is seeing Adams again in the next two days.

T. Yes.

J.M. And we hope to have more meetings as well with various people...

T. Yes.

J.M. So I think we will know within a few days whether we may be in some sort of business or other...

T. Yes..

J.M. Anchram I hope will meet McGuinness later this week conceivably Thursday. McGuinness wants this to be very private this meeting but I think that Michael Anchram has rightly taken the line that if we have secret meetings that aren't (devoid ?) it just causes more trouble than does good.

T. On that note I should say ..

J.M. McGuinness will have to handle that..

T. Yes. On that note I should stress to you that while I have briefed our system to the effect that I have put forward ideas to you on the concept that Washington Three would be put as a judgement of what was acceptable rather than a pre-condition ... I have n't given any indication that ideas were given because as you know that was written

by myself ... it is purely my own work and it was merely to have something that we could both work on that would illustrate where we might find agreement.

J.M. John Hume and Seamus Mallon ... John Hume was ... Seamus Mallon ... Seamus Mallon was asking why the Summit had been called off. He did not seem to know why the Summit had been called off. And I said that I could not go into details with that he would have to pursue that elsewhere...

T. Sure.

J.M. My discussions with you are confidential.

T. Well I briefed him very fully on that actually.

J.M. I don't think it always gets through to the other members of Sinn Fein as the SDLP.

T. Well there was three of them there..... No we had the whole ... I had the whole Parliamentary Party in to see me actually on the day after we asked for the post-ponement and I briefed them pretty fully ... from my perspective anyway ... of the reasons of for the postponement.

J.M. An interesting question then that Seamus should have asked..

T. Yes..... I don't know...

J.M. make the point about John.

T. Yes no it wasn't ... it couldn't have been. We had quite a tough meeting insofar as I said we had received this very serious statement from Sinn Fein on the Saturday telling us what they would do if this went ahead ... and that we found them subsequently when talking to you that Washington Three was still a problem. I said that you know ... I was horrified by Sinn Fein's approach and that a choice might have to come near sooner or later where we would have to say that we were going to go ahead with you and not have to...

J.M. Is there anyone listening to this call at your end John?

T. I think there may be one person. Yes.

J.M. Okay.

T. Yes.

J.M. Right.

T. But if you want me to stop that I can.

J.M. No no no...

T. I mean it is the only person in our system who knows about the bit of paper ...

J.M. They do. They do. That is the point I was worried about. That is the only point I was worried about.

T. There is one person.

J.M. just touched upon it.

T. It is that person. It is only one person. Thats Paddy..

J.M. Thats okay. Thats fine. We had a good meeting with the DUP. Quite the best I have had for a long time ...

T. Yes

J.M. ... with them. But they are still very resistant. They are very much on the same sort of line as Trimble. If Sinn Fein had some electoral legitimacy they could talk to them. I don't know whether we can work something around the Trimble idea at the end of the ... if we were able to go down the joint approach we were thinking of. The twin track approach. Maybe there is something we can tack on the end of that.

T. I think that is possible if...

J.M. I think it is possible...but ...

T. Strand two would have to be worked into it.

J.M. don't leak it. I want to give that some thought ...

T. I think the key element would be that the Strand Two discussion i.e. the North South discussion..... pardon

J.M. What strikes me about it is that our objective is to get them all to sit down and talk.

T. Yes.

J.M. The Unionists appear to be saying.... appear to be saying ... that they will talk if it is at the end of an election.

T. Yes.

J.M. What I am beginning to winkle out of them is quite interesting time limited.....specifically talks about the future.... list basis so we get everybody involved ... size of when one thinks of an assembly one sort of simply thinks 120 people and the sort of Strand One thing and I don't think that is the only option. It could be quite small..

T. Yes.

J.M. That is the sort of electing an negotiating team.

T. Yes.

J.M. Now I ... it is too early to be certain but I think they might ... just might be something lurking in there that would get us around the bend. Anyway I want to do a bit more work on it and then talk to you again but I don't propose to spread this all around the place and I would be grateful if you could hang on to it to yourself for the time being.

T. Well as I think I may have mentioned to you in passing we actually have done some work on this ourselves anyway which was done as sort of an administrative exercise some months ago in case that we might reach the point where it would be useful so.... it is fortunate.... we have probably ...

J.M. If you want to share your thoughts on it in a letter direct to me bypassing other people that would be quite helpful

T. Yes I think I can do that. If not I will find some other way of conveying these thought to you.

J.M. Great. I mean there is no immediate urgency about it..

T. No no.

J.M. But it might be useful to know.

T. Yes that's good.

J.M. Well how are you? How was the rest of your wedding anniversary?

T. It was absolutely marvellous. It was a pity you had to leave because I was out on the beach.... we did not leave until the following morning and we had the beach there down the coast all to ourselves. It was literally like having a private beach.

J.M. How lovely.

T. It was marvellous.

J.M. Norma said why didn't I tell her that any of the other wives were going to be there.

T. Well I hope that next time you will tell her. Fionnula has come with me to most of these things. I don't know if there is anything else we wanted to just hold on and I will just check the things I wanted to say to you. When do you think we might be able to talk about that question of the ideas?

J.M. I hope next week.

T. Yes.

J.M. If we get the various other meetings through this week we will know a good deal on more clearly where Sinn Fein are ... if this meeting with Angham and McGuinness goes ahead on Thursday.

T. Yes.

J.M. It is a bit hit and miss at the moment. It may be Thursday. McGuinness has told Hume it will be Thursday but he has not actually told us it will be Thursday yet.

T. Yes.

J.M. We can accommodate Thursday if that is what he wants.

T. The other ...

J.M. So that Hume is seeing Adams again and will then come back to us.

T. Yes.

J.M. What of course is the extra grit in the oyster now ... we now have had both the Unionists Parties beginning to put forward ideas. I have to consider those as well.

T. In regard to?

J.M. The Trimble ideas.

T. Oh yes. Yes. Well I intend to be quite positive about that idea when I meet him but what I will stress is that ... I hope I can do this without frightening him off the idea ... that it would have to be accompanied by commencement of Strand Two discussions. That we could n't allow an internal situation to proceed without something happening on Strand Two. Now I haven't precisely worked out how I would present that to him because I don't want to present that to him in such a way that he feels that he abandons the idea because I think there is quite an amount of hopefulness in the idea but that would be my approach to it. Now, did you get any reaction to that idea from the SDLP?

J.M. They didn't like it.

T. Yes.

J.M. They didn't really listen to it either because what they were objecting to was what they recall as the old Stand One assembly.

T. Yes.

J.M. And I didn't pursue the matter with them. It was clear it would have been a dialogue of the death this morning.

T. Yes.

J.M. And frankly I am less well persuaded... I am less well placed to persuade them than you are

T. Yes

J.M. I am better placed to persuade the Unionists on other things

T. Yes

J.M. So I tried my toe gently in the water when the water reopens up ... I didn't stir it much.

T. Yes. Well indeed we will have to work on that. I think probably the way the sequence would be to ... I would

J.M. There were millions of reporters waiting outside and I didn't want John Hume to go straight out and denounce it.

T. Well exactly.

J.M. So I didn't pursue it.

T. Yes. I think I can pursue it with the SDLP after I have spoken to Trimble about it. That will probably be the best sequence.

J.M. I think so and then you and I better keep in touch. I shall be available later in the week if you want a word ...

T. Yes ...

J.M. ... or over the weekend.

T. Would there be anything to be said for some contact between Robin Butler and Paddy Teahon just to ...

J.M. There might well be.

T. ... just run through ...

J.M. I don't think at the moment there is a great deal that they can say to one another but in a few days yes.

T. Yes.

J.M. At the moment that is appropriate. I am happy for it.

T. A last point. The question of prison conditions, life sentenced prisoners and the remission. The legislation to provide for the 50% remission. Now I mentioned to you that any progress that can be made on any of those issues would be very welcome I think we shouldn't underestimate the importance of the prisoners issue even though they will not admit that there is any linkage between the prisoners issue and their attitude to other questions because they don't want prisoners to be seen as hostages to the good behaviour of Sinn Fein outside. I think

in practical terms a degree of urgency on that issue can have quite significant benefits. I know that you have had to work very hard on something else in that department today I am not threatening you on the subject today. But I think it is something...

J.M. No I understand the point...I just hope that other people saying too much publicly don't make it more difficult...

T. Well I read that point. I understand that and I will obviously bear it in mind in anything I have to say...

J.M. I know you would ...

T. Okay that is very satisfactory and I will talk to you next week then.

J.M. Okay John I look forward to it.

T. Okay thanks.

J.M. Incidentally I think the rugby is at Twinckham.

T. Yes. But it was January I did not actually find out myself.

J.M. It is not Lansdowne Road I don't think.

T. Well it doesn't matter where it is I suppose really but I don't think it is before Christmas.

J.M. No I think it is after Christmas.

T. I think we might find something before Christmas.

J.M. I was just thinking that was a nice idea anyway.

T. Yes exactly. Okay

J.M. See you John.

T. Be in touch. Bye bye.

J.M. Bye bye.

Ends.