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Reference Code: 2021/106/25

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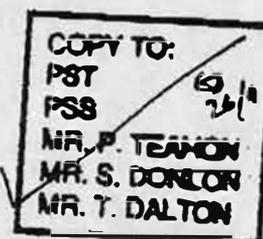
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26 September, 1996.

Mr. Seán O hUiginn,
Second Secretary,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
St. Stephen's Green,
DUBLIN 2.



Dear Secretary,

Conversation with David Trimble

This morning I visited the British Army's Staff College in Camberly to address middle ranking officers on the Peace Process. According to the organisers this was the first time that the staff and command course had been addressed by an official Irish representative to explain the Irish Government's approach to the Northern conflict. I addressed the officers for about an hour and took questions for another hour or so. My contribution was part of a three day module devoted to Northern Ireland. Other speakers include the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who is to speak tomorrow, David Trimble who also spoke this morning and Eddie McGrady who is speaking this afternoon. Speakers take part in their own sessions only, so I did not have an opportunity to hear the UUP leader's address, nor he mine.

Officers on the course told me that Trimble's speech was mainly devoted to a history of the Protestant presence in Northern Ireland and a defence of his actions at Drumcree. Most said that it was mainly backward looking with little evidence of a vision of the future of Northern Ireland or the leadership that they would expect from one of the main protagonists in the talks.

Before I spoke and while I was having coffee with the officers, Trimble sought me out for a few moments before his return to London. He was affable and

2

pleasant and teased me about my likely contribution - he had given the objective and accurate story as against the propaganda that I would be spouting - and the fact that the course was being run in the Alanbrooke Hall - "a good Unionist General from Northern Ireland".

He then turned to more serious matters. He said that he had read the joint paper setting out the scenario for the transition into substantive talks in the car on the way down and he was extremely disappointed at its contents which were totally unacceptable and ran counter to everything that he had been saying in the talks for the past fortnight. He had made it clear that the establishment of a committee was not on. It was a device for delay and procrastination on the decommissioning issue. The Irish Government would use it to prevent real progress until Sinn Féin joined the talks, and when and if Sinn Féin did join, they would block progress using the consensus rule. He did not see it as a basis for agreement.

I argued the case for the Governments' approach making the point that it was imperative to move to the substantive phase of the negotiations and to make progress on the three strands. He retorted that decommissioning was substantive and that he would not agree to any approach that did not make clear what would be required of the IRA before Sinn Féin entered the talks. If more time were needed to work out an agreed approach to decommissioning then more time would have to be devoted to that issue. He would not be rushed into the three stranded negotiations. The issue was far too important for that.

I asked (because I did not know) if the issue would be taken up on Monday. Trimble said that there was something to that effect in the Secretary of State's letter, but that he was not aware of any agreement to have a trilateral on Monday. He left, saying that he had not yet had an opportunity to discuss the paper with anyone in the Party and that he would be having consultations with his colleagues. I hoped, when he had an opportunity to study the proposals in more detail, that he would see the merits of the Governments' approach.

Yours sincerely,



Ted Barrington
Ambassador