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Meeting with Mr. Jeffrey Donaldson of the UUP
16 August, 1995

1. I met Mr. Jeffrey Donaldson of the UUP in Northern Ireland on August 16th.
2. We had a general discussion on the current situation. In spite of the tensions, he was optimistic the ceasefire would hold. The current disturbances had to be seen in the perspective of the horrors which had happened over the last twenty-five years.
3. He said the UUP were very anxious to chart a political path to talks, which everybody recognised would be necessary. There was however a great lack of trust at present. Not only would be UUP leadership have difficulty sitting across the table from Gerry Adams, they would have some difficulty with Hume also in present circumstances.
4. We discussed the decommissioning issue. Mr. Donaldson said that concerns on this went very deep in the unionist community. He was familiar with the proposal for an international Commission. He was unsure whether the appointment of a Commission, without delivery of weapons, would meet unionist concerns, but did not rule this out. He accepted that it was unrealistic to expect any delivery of weapons "up front". He thought it might be helpful if the Commission were to be accompanied by a pledge by the Republican movement that there would be no recourse to weapons during the Commission's work. //
5. I said our view was that a "total cessation of violence" meant exactly that. The commitment he had in mind was, we

believed, already contained in that wider pledge. Since he felt it was helpful to spell it out, this could be looked at. I explained however the strong hesitations in the Republican camp about the Commission, based perhaps on the belief that it being pushed at the expense of the political agenda.

6. I pressed Mr. Donaldson on the possibility of a meeting with the Irish Government, possibly towards the end of the month. Mr. Donaldson said the UUP had been giving a lot of thought to avenues of progress. There was a proposal which they would be anxious to discuss with the Government at some point, although he accepted that it might be seen as a cynical unionist reversion to an internal approach.
7. What they had in mind sought to build on the earlier meeting between the SDLP and the UUP, as the two mainstream representatives of the communities. There should be a Forum or Assembly, whether elected or not, set up to deal with various economic and social matters. (He instanced the new European Community initiative). This would enable people to get used to working together. It would be an acceptable way of bringing the unionists and Sinn Fein under the same umbrella.
8. I said it was widely recognised on all sides that anything which renewed the political base in Northern Ireland could be very helpful. He was right in assuming there would be great reservations about the proposal on the part of Northern nationalists. I asked about the danger that an election would result in hardline mandates, particularly by the DUP. He acknowledged this difficulty, and said they would also be open to a model which did not involve an election. He saw a danger in the unionist forum now being pushed by the DUP. Between that and the Forum in Dublin

there would be increased polarisation. His proposal was intended to avoid that.

9. I asked whether it would be possible to have an early meeting with the Government to discuss this, or any other proposal. Mr. Donaldson thought that would be difficult before the leadership election was out of the way. We had a long discussion on this. He expected Molyneaux would bring matters to a head fairly soon, but the procedures required a ballot of the membership of the Ulster Unionist Council, and probably would not be completed before some time in October.
10. He expected there would be four candidates, viz Taylor, Ross, Smith and Maginnis. The ballot would be presided by the President of the Council, Mr. Jo Cunningham ("the man in the grey sash"). Donaldson thought Maginnis had no chance. Smith was difficult to assess, but had damaged himself by his non-appearance at the Drumcree confrontation. Trimble was unlikely to run, and would back Taylor. The race was probably between Taylor and Ross and "we should be praying that it was not Ross", who would never get into dialogue. While acknowledging fully Taylor's maverick capacities, Donaldson felt he was the only contender with the status enabling him to lead his party into negotiations. He agreed with me that Molyneaux was likely to be hostile to Taylor's candidacy, but did not seem to think that would be a major factor.
11. Discussing the possible lines of a future accommodation, Mr. Donaldson said that the East/West dimension could be an important enabling factor for unionists. They saw the Anglo-Irish Agreement as London and Dublin ganging up over the heads of the people of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland was bound to Scotland by ethnic and business ties. A new Labour Government might well bring in assemblies for Scotland and Wales. How would these be linked into the

general scheme of things? Would a future scheme cater for the relationships between Wales and the South? I said the Taoiseach had spoken publicly about this dimension at the IBEC/CBI dinner in Belfast some time ago. It was explicitly flagged, although not fully developed, in the Framework Document. It was certainly a dimension which could be developed constructively in the future.

12. Mr. Donaldson said that while the UUP were thinking creatively about ways to address other peoples problems, including those of Sinn Fein, they saw little evidence that there was any reverse concern. Nationalists wanted only to preach over the heads of the unionists. Did I sense any concern in those circles to meet unionists even half-way?

13. I said the unionist refusal to come to the negotiating table loomed very large in nationalist perceptions. I had to accept frankly that at the various meetings which the Government had had with the Northern parties, concern for the unionist position was perhaps more developed on the Government side of the table. However absolutely no-one questioned the proposition that unionists agreement was a sine qua non of any accommodation. There was a pragmatic streak in the Sinn Fein make-up which should not be overlooked.

14. Mr. Donaldson said there was a growing acceptance of contact with Sinn Fein, for example at local government level. Who would have thought that the DUP Mayor of Belfast could host a function with Gerry Adams in the front row? It would be helpful in terms of unionist perceptions if we could keep up the pressure on Sinn Fein on the punishment beatings, on expulsions and missing bodies and on the burning of Orange halls. I said we put strong pressure on Sinn Fein on these items. However they had been adamant they had no involvement in the burning of Orange halls. Mr. Donaldson

thought there was involvement at least at local or individual level.

15. At the end of our conversation we discussed various ways of intensifying UUP/Irish Government contacts, even if a formal meeting could not yet be held. He agreed it would be useful to consider inviting representatives to various appropriate functions, on case by case basis.



Sean O hUiginn
17 August, 1995