



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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AM SAID NA BÉIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

18 September 1998

Mr. Dermot Gallagher  
Second Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Secretary,

**Conversation with Secretary of State Mowlam**

Dr. Mowlam spoke with me at last night's reception at the Embassy for President McAleese.

Dr. Mowlam is deeply worried by the problems that have arisen over forming the Shadow Executive. She said that the mood of celebration so evident among yesterday evening's guests could turn out to be premature.

According to Mowlam both governments have been hopeful that a gesture on decommissioning could happen sooner rather than later. Trimble may have interpreted this hopefulness in such a way as to lead him to harden his own position. Mowlam fears that the Executive of the UUP may have been left with the impression that Trimble was meeting Adams to ensure a start to decommissioning before the Shadow Executive is formed. Trimble may even have offered, as a quid pro quo for the Adams meeting, the setting of a clear precondition on decommissioning.

Mowlam said that her own judgement is that the IRA is not yet near the moment at which it might be prepared to consider decommissioning. Trimble's condition for forming the Shadow Executive is incapable of being met. Mowlam said with some regret that the only way of saving the Agreement is to put pressure on Trimble to back down. She implied that there can be no realistic expectation of a climb-down by the other side. (She did not refer directly to the letter of the agreement.)

Mowlam discussed with me the kind of assurances that could be given to Trimble to enable him to show more flexibility. As far as she herself is concerned, the issue on which the two governments should now concentrate is the return of the bodies of the

*Too sanguine  
promise on Adams*

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disappeared. This would in her view be a significant step, it is a step that can be delivered, and in the right circumstances, it could give Trimble some political protection as he moves forward on the Shadow Executive.

I wondered whether realistically Trimble could be persuaded to back down in the next few weeks in the absence of a clear indication, or at least a legitimate expectation, that decommissioning would begin at some specific moment in the future, for example when the new institutions acquire their powers.

Mowlam felt it would be risky to create expectations for the future about which there could still be room for argument. A line in the sand of this kind, even if it is drawn as far ahead as January or February, could produce a crisis for the Agreement at that time. Mowlam would therefore prefer to see the formation of the Shadow Executive balanced by movement on the disappeared. Mowlam's thinking was that pressure needs to be put on the UUP to move to the next stage on this basis, and not much else.

#### Comment

Dr. Mowlam's suggestion that Trimble may have made commitments to the UUP Executive is given some indirect credence by a conversation I had yesterday with Trimble's office. I was in contact with them about functions to be hosted by Ambassador Barrington at the Labour Party conference. It was said to me in passing that although it is "a matter for the UUP", and not for civil servants, Mr. Trimble is under more pressure than appears publicly, that we should watch the "body language" of UUP politicians, and that it might not be safe to assume that an act of leadership on Trimble's part would succeed now as similar acts have succeeded in the past. It was also mentioned to me informally that David Trimble has been talking about contacting the Taoiseach in the days following his return from China.

It may be a straw in the wind that plans for Mr. Trimble and Mr. Mallon to address a fringe meeting at the Liberal Democrat conference on Monday have been altered. David Trimble will apparently travel alone to Brighton and Seamus Mallon will fulfil an engagement in London. In Blackpool the following week Seamus is intending to come to the dinner hosted by the Ambassador, while David Trimble will attend only our reception. In both instances, there could of course be valid diary reasons for the diverging paths of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Yours sincerely,

*Philip McDonagh*

Philip McDonagh  
Counsellor