



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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by Hade

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Transcript of conversation between the Taoiseach and the  
British Prime Minister of 2 July 1998

T: Hello, hello.

BPM: Hi Bertie, how are you

T: Well, how are you getting on up there

BPM: Well the problem is in my coming, it inflates the situation in one sense.

T: Frankly, you have to keep trying

BPM: Yes and in one sense it would be very off not to come the day after the Assembly and all the history of it. So the position is this, I have spent an hour with Adams this evening. I mean I don't know if he's being disingenuous with me when he says he doesn't have a great deal of control of the situation

T: I had a bit of a frosty conversation with him earlier on, Tony, just before he met you

BPM: Yes he told me he had spoken to you

T: Yes because he didn't like the idea of me trying to put down anything at all, to try and work out anything. Having said that, his contact to the residents earlier on this evening is the first contact he has made in a week and I know that because Eamonn is still in ~~the~~ <sup>here</sup> with all the community

BPM: So they're not budging at all

T: No, no they have been up and down everything and talking and looking at things. The difficulty, and they're not budging, there's no real life being spoken and that's what Eamonn is saying. Having said that, you know they're still talking to them. The difficulty that they are finding is, what Adams is saying to me is, that there has been no contact with the Unionists or the Loyalists or by the Orangemen.

BPM: Yes, that was what I was just saying, now

T: But I think he's wrong in that because the reason that there has been no contact is that we don't want anyone making contact with us in work, so just to answer your question correctly, from what I have been able to make up with the two guys inside and both of them are bright guys who are watching things and sounding things, he doesn't seem to have that much contact with them or there doesn't seem to be many SF people in there. The lads are kind of convinced that they're dealing with the residents and they seem a bit isolated, you know, so he might be three quarters telling us the position, but I wouldn't say fully.

**BPM:** Well, what he asked me was, he said, he made the point that no one had spoken to them and I said well the problem is that it's a bit difficult if nothing is pre-cooked and he then said that why can't David Trimble send a representative down to speak to them and I said that I would try and arrange that, I'm trying to speak to Trimble now and get him to agree that a representative comes to talk to them. The only basis on which a deal is doable here is that they allow the march to go down, but they set up this new forum where the Orange Order agree to dialogue ~~is~~ not just on parades but in all the various issues etc. etc. etc. and they agree to have that meeting literally straight away and no sort of

**T:** Yes and they have to stop the banning of McCionnaith as well

**BPM:** There's that additional problem which can't at present be circumvented. The trouble is I am prepared to get them to circumvent that problem or to do my very best to, if I know that there's some sort of deal on offer

**T:** Yes that's right

**BPM:** And you see, the point is this, you see, the thing from the Nationalists point of view is, they were prepared to say, to make such an offer, (1) then I could try to push the Orange into it (2) if they didn't do it, the Orange, then the Nationalists would put both themselves and me in upholding the parades commission in a far stronger position, you know what I mean

**T:** Exactly

**BPM:** You could then say, well were you even prepared to allow them to get there, and they can say all we wanted was a bloody forum but then they even insisted that we could only bring people they wanted

**T:** Exactly, I presume, Tony, just so that I am clear on it in my mind and I think I am so I will just ask the question so I am clear, there is no possibility of the Orange guys agreeing to anything, if they're not allowed down that road and won't bother with another, is that the, I mean to get their agreement to moving on, they're going to have to get down that road in some way or another, is that the

**BPM:** Em, I don't think that there is any possibility or an agreement unless they go down the road

**T:** Yes, that's my own feeling, I just wanted to be sure that I'm right. You see on one side, that's what I believe, but I don't want to be seen crossing the Garvaghy Road people, they are accusing me at the moment that that is what I am doing, but it's because Eamonn has had to push them very hard during the day. Now I did say to Eamonn tonight, well listen, you know, say to them we have to go, there's no point in us being here, but they didn't want us to do that either

**BPM:** No, but you see I am prepared to do anything I can in this situation provided I know there is an opening and I don't even know from the residents side. I actually have got

the Orange side to give me an opening but at the moment I don't even know whether, just hang on one second Bertie

T: Sure

BPM: You see I think I can see the Orange side opening up. What I can't see is any chink of light at all on the Nationalists side at the moment. And I mean frankly what I am worried about already is getting myself involved in this negotiation even though I keep saying that I am not here to negotiate, but my own bloody credibility is now on the line with this thing and I can't see what else to do because it's so important and the fact of the matter is if the whole thing breaks down and we uphold the Parades Commission and we prevent the march then that is fine at one level, but I tell you the outcome is just going to be ghastly and I had a pretty alarming conversation with ~~Royal~~ <sup>Royal</sup> Flanagan of the Loyalist Paramilitary they're planning

T: Yes, yes

BPM: And so, you know the Nationalist community isn't going to win in the end at all

T: Yes, that's my, that's my view, and actually funny I had my National Executive of my party tonight and that's their view as well, so nobody has not seen that ~~that~~.

BPM: Yes, so what I am saying to the Orange Order is that you've got to treat these people with dignity and respect, I mean its down where your<sup>s</sup> marching down. You know if you want to march down it the quick<sup>d</sup> pro quo is that you treat them properly. Well if that is where we are at, then I think the thing is doable in the sense that there has been something that's been gained out of this because the Parades Commission have put the <sup>onus</sup> ~~orders~~ on the Orange Order to treat them with dignity and respect. But if the Nationalist side or this guy McKenna simply just sits tight on it and says well I've got the Parades Commission ruling so you go out and enforce it, well that's fine and I guess in the end that's what has to happen but

T: It's a sad situation

BPM: Its going to be a very sad situation and I suspect that the Chief Constables' going to say to us, well I've got to tell you that, you know, we will hold this situation but the loss of life will be there

T: It will happen. Does he reckon all ~~the~~ paramilitaries will back attacks then, he does

BPM: Well this is very between ourselves, we will treat this between ourselves, he thinks that there is evidence that they are acquiring clean vents and he reckons that the people acquiring them are some sort of nut cases, you see

T: Yes, well that's what I kind of think. No, I'm actually ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> one with you on this. I ~~see~~ <sup>see</sup> the Nationalists interest in this is to be accommodating, they will <sup>be</sup> far better by being accommodating than just holding there. Now, the difficulty is, and this is where Adams wasn't very helpful tonight to me, was that we had been having useful

enough conversations earlier on with one of his colleagues but he didn't seem to be agreeing very much with that, but do you think Tony that the Loyalists or not the Loyalists but the Orangemen or David Trimble's people would talk to the community including McCionnaith. I don't think he can be isolated out of it, I mean if they try and take him out of any delegations, I don't think it will bloody well work

**BPM:** No, I think that this representative of Trimbles, I mean Johnson has just come back in, is he prepared to put.... Right so this guy is prepared, is he prepared to talk to McKenna as well? Yes, I think this guy will then, this guy is Trimble's man on the ground there and will actually go and talk to McKenna

**T:** Ok

**BPM:** Now, I am prepared to put the squeeze on the Orange lot in some form or other to have McKenna around the place

**T:** Yes to have him involved in some part or another

**BPM:** Although to be quite honest about it, we should think really how to deal with this guy in the future because it seems to me to be ridiculous as if one guy could hold the whole show up.

**T:** Unfortunately, I think they're supporting him

**BPM:** Yes, but I mean there must be some way out of that but that is another matter, I am prepared to do that but I need to know that there is some realistic possible way of them saying, well we'll let the march go down provided you give us, you know, X Y and Z.

**T:** Mm, well I think if we can get them talking. Well, what was Adams view on that, I mean, what did he say to you in the end?

**BPM:** Right, well this guy <sup>Johnson?</sup> Thompson is going to call McKenna to night and take it up with him (you better try and track down Adams for me)

**T:** And he's going to contact him tonight,

**BPM:** Well Adams view is that it is very difficult to do that, to put it down at all because they just don't want it done. But I think that we, you know I think that we can probably put some pressure on him and get the US to do so too, because I think that he is really not thinking through this

**T:** No, no, he's thinking to Sunday night, but on Monday morning - - -

**BPM:** Exactly, exactly, your absolutely right. I keep saying to him look, Trimble's a guy that, I spoke to Trimble today incidentally and I found him completely reasonable and I think on the verge of talking and I think all Adams has to do is give Trimble something and Trimble's going to talk to him and think he is very very very close to

doing that. As I said to Adams look Trimble is the first casualty of the march not going down on the Parades Commission ruling. He is the first casualty of that, he is then seen to have failed and this ghastly sort of alliance that is there possible between Robinson and McCartney <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ old Donaldson, is there any prospect in which case you know in 6 months time we could be dealing with a different face of unionism all together trying to rebuild the whole thing.

**T:** So what we have to do is try to get Thompson to, I mean this Thompson fella is going to contact McKenna tonight

**BPM:** Yes

**T:** So we have to try to get to be

**BPM:** Yes, we have got to push him into the position of being reasonable about it and if he's not prepared to be reasonable we have got to get other people that are around who are prepared to be reasonable and to come out

**T:** Ok

**BPM:** And I think that we have got to put maximum, my view is that if a breakthrough doesn't happen before noon tomorrow, it is very difficult, because they've got this big residents' meeting at 8.30 tomorrow night and all of the tension will just build up. If these mad loyalist people ~~are~~ <sup>here</sup> beating the damn drums, beating the drums outside my window .....

**T:** Ok Tony, I'll get working on our people

**BPM:** Ok if you would Bertie

**T:** Thompson is going to contact McKenna some time tonight

**BPM:** The Trimble's man will contact McKenna tonight so that thing will start, I will speak to Adams again now. I've seen the churchmen, provided there is some sort of breakthrough they're prepared to come behind that and back it

**T:** Ok, are you staying in Belfast tonight or are you going back to London

**BPM:** Well I wanted to go back to London, but the trouble is I've got this church service about the health situation

**T:** Sure, well I can contact you in London in the morning

**BPM:** I mean I may just stay, I don't know. The trouble is, as ever, I'm in for a penny I'm in for a pound really.

**T:** Well I don't know. We can keep contact anyway by

**BPM:** Either here or there, well we'll be in touch

**T:** I'll get you in London

**BPM:** Ok, so what I might do I'll ring you one way or another early in the morning.

**BPM:** Ring me one way or another early in the morning and do yourself whatever you can do down there. Thanks Bertie, thanks a lot Bertie, bye bye.