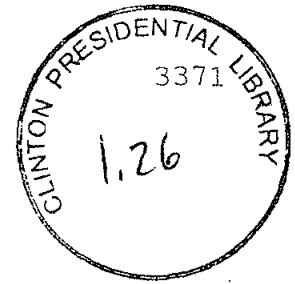


~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with British Prime Minister Blair
(UP)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Prime Minister Blair

Notetakers: Sean Rice, James Smith, David Higgins, Marianna Papadimitriou, Jeffrey Rathke

DATE, TIME May 8, 1998, 1:50 - 2:12 p.m.
AND PLACE: Dover, Delaware

The President: Tony? (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Hi, Bill. (U)

The President: How are you? (U)

Prime Minister Blair: I'm fine. I'm great, I'm just, actually, in my local workman's club doing constituent surgery in county Durham. (U)

The President: Are you in Durham? I love the Durham Cathedral. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: I just came out of a bar where the old blokes were telling me about their troubles; from that to you. (U)

The President: Good for you. I love Durham. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Did you come here? (U)

The President: I did. I liked it so well I brought Hillary back to see the cathedral and walk around the town. I took her to York and Durham on one of our trips. (U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified by: Glyn T. Davies

Reason: 1.5(b,d)

Declassify On: 5/9/08

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

DECLASSIFIED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE
INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)
ISCAP APPEAL NO. 2013-090, document no. 25
DECLASSIFICATION DATE: October 14, 2015

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2

Prime Minister Blair: Oh, well. I was a choirboy at the cathedral in Durham, if you can believe that. (U)

The President: You still have that choirboy look. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: How are you doing? (U)

The President: I'm doing wonderful. I'm looking forward to being with you. I'm glad you and Major went up there together. It was good. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Yeah, I hope it helped. (U)

The President: You know it did help some. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes. You know my view -- it's quite right to take the decision you did. I know Jim Steinberg was there and took the temperature of the unionist people.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: I think they didn't want to give Paisley and his crowd a new pretext -- "that's the guy that gave Gerry Adams a visa and broke the eggs," and all that stuff. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: That's true, but it's the right decision

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: I'd like that. We released a few things yesterday that we will do, and maybe we could pony it up some. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes, well, I'm now taking a real grip on this thing and running it like a political campaign.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: So you think we ought to do some sort of joint announcement while we are there? (C)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

Prime Minister Blair: Yes, I think if we can do that, it's all coming down to one point.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: And they can't be in government if they don't... ~~(c)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: It wouldn't just be me, but it would mess them up here in America. Almost all Irish guys here, including guys who gave them money under questionable circumstances, would bail out on them if the vote went positive and if they reneged. You'd see major abandonment of them by Irish-Americans. That's something they can't afford. They know they can't. I'm not so worried anymore -- I was worried some of the IRA offshoots might take action against Gerry, but the mainstream crowd knows they can't violate the agreement or the Americans will go berserk on them. ~~(c)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Yes, I think for that to be said is very important. That's reassuring. ~~(c)~~

The President: That's the only reason I wanted to go. I'm not under the illusion that all those Protestants love me. ~~(c)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Well, you're absolutely right, that's why I was keen --

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: If we say it in Birmingham, it might still have enough echo to get there. ~~(c)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Yes, I agree. It certainly would. And the stuff you've been saying today, or someone in the White House has been saying today, about money and investment -- there's something leading the news now about that. ~~(c)~~

The President: That's something we put out yesterday. ~~(c)~~

Prime Minister Blair: It shows you, though, that anything you say will be carried and given prominence. What Paisley keeps

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4

doing is putting out posters saying that Gerry Adams will be Minister of Health. [E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)] (C)

The President: The old guy is good. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)]

The President: What will the vote be? (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Sinn Fein, you mean? (C)

The President: Will three-quarters of Sinn Fein vote for the referendum? (C)

Prime Minister Blair: I don't know. I suspect yes, about that. (C)

The President: It seems like a pro forma thing. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: I don't think Gerry Adams would say he'll win the vote unless he is going to win the vote. So I think it will be pretty resounding. They're prepared to lose some of their folks. Prisoners is a big issue for them. [E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)]

The President: I agree with that. Yesterday, I had a group in to see me that I think is called WAVE. It's a group of victims who lost children, brothers, and parents. They were mostly, but

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

5

not entirely, Protestants. A group that really wants the IRA to decommission. They're a militant peace group. They want to deal with thousands of people in their inner and physical pain. I agree with you. (c)

We've all taken our licks for Gerry, so if they want a role in the government, they have got to have some demonstration of good faith on this violence issue. These women gave me an idea yesterday. Your people could vet it for practicality. Maybe you and Bertie and I could ask for it. (c)

They say that there is a some relatively small number of people, like 20 -- people in the police or otherwise hated by the IRA, whose remains have never been recovered. They say if there's not immediate decommissioning, right after the vote, if you could work out the legalities so that people would not be prosecuted and the IRA could somehow direct people to the remains, so their families could give them a sanctified burial, that would have a huge psychological impact over there. I told them I'd try to help, but I'd talk to you about it. They don't want vengeance, they just want their people back. (c)

Prime Minister Blair: Yeah, I think that would be good. I will. (c)

The President:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

Prime Minister Blair: Yeah, I think that's a great idea, we'll look into that

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: I will do it,

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

6

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Yes, it could give them some breathing space.

(S)

Prime Minister Blair: Okay, I'll look into that, Bill. (S)

The President: In terms of you and me making another economic statement, I will do whatever you think is best for the vote. If you want to do it in Birmingham or down in London. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: Well, I think there are two sorts of stories from your angle: one is investments; the other is a firm message to the IRA. (S)

The President: I'm glad to do that, too. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: I think those two in combination would be very good. (S)

The President: See, by the time I get there, we are only a week from the vote. So it probably is good to do it sooner rather than later so it does not seem like some desperate election move. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: I'll have our guys get in touch with you. Maybe we could do two separate announcements -- a Sinn Fein one and an economic one. You organize it, and I will read whatever script you want me to read. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: That's all it is. What did you make of Netanyahu? Madeleine said you were very good. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: I spent a lot of time with him in the last year. After Madeleine's first session, I thought he was a hard negotiator and not a no-negotiator. Then he called and asked Dennis to come over, and I thought that was a good sign. And now Dennis is there and his spokesman put out a statement saying he is not coming Monday. I never thought he would, but I thought he would come once I got back from Europe. I don't know yet what's going on, but I may want to call you again once I find out. (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

This may be a place where we could do a reverse good cop-bad cop, where Europe could bump him a little harder. (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: ...And then it vanishes. (C)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

8

Prime Minister Blair: It vanishes. ~~(C)~~

The President:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

But, when I see you, we can work on it more. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Yeah, well I'll do the same. He calls me pretty regularly at the moment.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: You know they will. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: That's exactly where the Israelis are. Eighty percent of them want that. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: Okay. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: We'll stay in touch and talk when the G-8 comes. ~~(C)~~

The President: I agree. You just let me know what you want. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: And, as ever, many thanks for all your help. Love to Hillary. (U)

The President: Yes. (U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

9

Prime Minister Blair: Yes, goodbye. (U)

The President: Bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY