

SECRET

Meeting with Sinn Féin

Saturday, 20th July

PST
PSS
Mr P Teahon
Mr T Dalton
JOL

Present were:

Official Side: Mr. Teahon, Mr. Dalton, Mr. O hUiginn

Sinn Féin side: Mr. Gerry Adams, Mr. Pat Doherty, Mr. Mitchell
McLoughlin, Ms. Dawn Doyle.

1. At the outset of the meeting Mr. Adams said he had heard the meeting between the Ormeau/Garvaghy/Bogside residents and the Taoiseach had not gone well. The Taoiseach had lectured the group for about fifteen minutes on the dangers of riots. Mr. O hUiginn said he had understood that the meeting had been a good one. The Taoiseach had impressed with his close knowledge of events. He wondered whether this assessment had come from Mr. Rice, whom the Taoiseach at one point had asked not to revisit ground already covered.
2. At the beginning of the meeting proper, Mr. Adams said there were two key elements he wanted addressed: One was the forthcoming marches in Derry and the Lower Ormeau. The second was where the talks were going.
3. On the parades, Mr. Adams recalled an earlier assessment by Mr. Teahon, that the key issue was now to manage the crisis. He had two discussions with John Hume on the issue.

4. Mr. McLoughlin said he would be discussing matters with Hume that evening also. There were two very worrying possibilities: either the march might be banned, leading to Loyalist confrontation with the RUC, or the march might be allowed to go ahead without the agreement of nationalists, again leading to confrontation. It was important to avoid those confrontations and to negotiate an agreement which could be applied to other situations.
5. He stressed the sense of deep anger in Derry, which was very reminiscent of 1969. Sinn Féin wanted to see an arrangement which allowed the Apprentice Boys to do a full tour of the city walls. That had to be however on the basis of consent of the host community. There was no possibility of selling an agreement which did not have the approval of the beleaguered communities in Garvaghy Road, Ormeau Road, etc. They hoped that an agreement could be thrashed out between representatives of the three "loyal orders" and the residents. There was some possibility that the British might go for the apparently symmetrical option of banning the march. That would lead to mayhem from the Loyalists. It could threaten the loyalist ceasefire.
6. Mr. Adams said that some in the Derry leadership were now taking the long view. Sentiment in the (Protestant) Fountain area was running very high. A liberal Protestant mediator (George Glenn of the Churches Trust) had been run out of the Fountain area for suggesting that the numbers of the Apprentice Boys parade might be limited.
7. Mr. O hUiginn stressed that Derry was the "Mecca" of the Apprentice Boys. The three loyal orders were separate institutions. They were led by, for the most part, short-term office holders with little power. They were fractious in the best of circumstances. It was probably unrealistic to expect that a general agreement could be reached with them in the space of time available, or even

at all. It would be more attainable to aim for an arrangement in Derry which set an example of the application of the necessary principles, rather than one binding in the orders as such.

8. Mr. McLoughlin thought a package which applied to Derry alone was not acceptable. Mr. Adams said that if they did pull off such an arrangement, it would send a very positive message to the British, to Paisley, etc. He added that if the British forced through the "feeder" parade on the Ormeau Road that morning, the arrangements in Derry were gone, irrespective of any local agreement. He stressed that the Government should meet the residents associations in all three areas.
9. Mr. McLoughlin said there was a lot of uncertainty among the SDLP people on the ground, who felt that Sinn Féin were taking advantage of the situation and that political control was slipping from them. People had an eye to the local elections next year.
10. Mr. O hUiginn indicated that Government representatives would make contact with the residents association, but on an individual and private rather than a public platform basis.
11. Mr. Dalton enquired whether any accommodation reached would be respected across all the republican spectrum. The Sinn Féin side indicated that it was difficult to control matters, and there would be hot-heads, but that an agreement approved by the Republican leadership in Derry would not be seriously challenged.

Reid had said the British Government could not just ignore the offer. He had indicated to John Hume that if the matter could be best progressed without a Sinn Féin meeting, then that could be looked at. He urged Mr. Teahon to go back to Mr. Holmes and to stress this was a good-faith effort by Sinn Féin.

20. Mr. Teahon said the British were also conscious of Loyalist unease and might want to reach out to the Loyalist groups, possibly as a cover for future contact with Sinn Féin. He said that Senator Mitchell was in a sensitive mode, and anxious to avoid accusations of partiality.
21. Mr. Dalton said the British seemed to want to deliver Trimble. If that failed then there was nothing to the process, and nothing to offer the IRA. Mr. Adams said Mitchell saw himself as the President's man and would do what was good for the President. There would be even greater merit in an overt US involvement, saying "we want to help". There was a common objective to put the negotiating process back on the rails. Any other scenario was fatalistic. Mr. Teahon said that if Trimble "delivered", that could set the scene for an IRA ceasefire, with Sinn Féin joining the talks in September. He enquired about the Sinn Féin suggestion that Mitchell could "do some good" in relation to the IRA ceasefire.
22. Mr. Adams thought there was a middle ground which all should aim for. A verbal commitment to substantive discussions in September aimed at a productive conclusion would be valuable, even if everyone knew that in September the parties could undo what they had promised. Combined with the proper management of the crisis over August, where everything was "still breakable" it would still allow the primacy of politics to come through. He thought Senator Mitchell could play a role in two ways, "both in the context of democratic resolution and in putting a real talks alternative in place". The

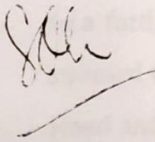
Irish Government needed some cohesive visible strategy which reassured nationalists without frightening unionists. Peter Temple-Morris had said that the thrust of British policy at present seemed towards an internal settlement.

23. Mr. Dalton said that an assessment that something would or would not advance the prospect of an IRA ceasefire was one of the most persuasive arguments which could be put forward. The find in London had sent shockwaves in terms of what was contemplated. He asked whether the talks resuming in September with procedural wrangling out of the way was likely to be sufficient to enable the ceasefire to be put back and inclusive talks to take place.
24. Mr. Adams said there were doubts whether the British were serious, but that did not matter. An attempt should be made to engage them. In some sections of the IRA there was a fatalistic acceptance that the demand (i.e. meaningful all-party talks) was so low that the British Government were bound to accept. If there was the political will to broker a cessation, the Republican movement could deliver. If there were proper all-party talks, then the IRA would have to live up to its stated position, even if there was bound to be an "undertow".
25. Mr. O hUiginn pointed to the "chicken and egg" problems in relation to the search for a ceasefire. Mr. Major obviously found it difficult to take risks, with the possibility, or even he might believe probability, of atrocities on his doorstep. As far as the Irish Government was concerned, on all previous occasions the Republican movement had been politically cordoned off, and the Governments had been insulated by treating them as simply beyond the pale. There was now a more direct contact, and consequently a more direct fear of being politically compromised by some atrocity. If that danger could

be got out of the way for both Governments through a ceasefire, new avenues of much more forthright cooperation could open up.

26. Mr. Adams said that his sense of the popular will was that the ordinary people in the street believed the British Government had killed McShane in Derry and there was a strong nationalist mood. He accepted however that an atrocity could cause that mood to swing back. He stressed the importance of the continuing IRA ceasefire on this island. Without the engagement of the Taoiseach in the peace process, there would have been an IRA campaign in Ireland over the past year. He suggested that Mr. Teahon should ask Downing Street what they would like the Republican movement to do.
27. Mr. Teahon said he felt they were still considering whether, if they went down this road, the IRA would do business. Major was essentially a tactician, but his *Panorama* argument that he need not have bothered with Northern Ireland showed some personal engagement. They were perhaps looking for some reason for confidence. Through various interviews, and the proposed outreach to Loyalists, they were perhaps threading their way towards the right direction.
28. Mr. Dalton referred again to the strong sense of nationalist solidarity which had emerged after the crisis in Drumcree. That was potentially a powerful instrument for good, and it would be a tragedy if it were fractured by an atrocity, instead of being used constructively in a ceasefire situation.
29. Mr. Adams, at the close of the meeting, emphasised again the importance of relating to the popular mood among nationalists in Northern Ireland. In relation to the marches, it was important that the Government should designate someone to relate to residents in Derry, Belfast and Garvaghy. In

relation to the peace process, perhaps the British scepticism should be turned on its head. They should be asked "what do you want the Republican movement to do?" There was a "measured war" by the IRA, even if not on this island. If the IRA were back at war, they could be expected to pursue it with ferocity. As regards Senator Mitchell (with whom Fr. Alex Reid proposed to make contact) their purpose at this point was only to ask him what he could do. He might perhaps talk to the Prime Minister and refer to the Hume/Adams initiative. He should certainly tell the British that the present state of the talks was not good enough. He should also press them to defuse the situation on the ground.



Sean Ó hUiginn

29 July 1996

12. Mr. McLoughlin mentioned the dangerous and aggressive posture of the RUC seeking out people coming out of clubs, etc., at a late hour, even when the flashpoint of parades had passed.

13.



14. In a further discussion of the parades issue, in which the Sinn Féin side stressed that any agreement in Derry had to be endorsed by the Garvaghy Road and the Lower Ormeau, Mr. Adams stressed also the importance of making contacts with Archbishop Eames. They stressed the urgency of early Irish Government contacts with the people concerned.
15. Mr. Adams then asked the Irish side for an account of the Anglo-Irish Conference. This was given, stressing the strong position taken by the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice.
16. Mr. Adams asked for an assessment of the current state of the round-table talks. He said that in normal circumstances they would have been calling on the SDLP to leave the talks. Mallon's exit from the Forum showed that the SDLP had miscalculated that issue and should not have joined in the first place. Mr. Adams stressed that the talks had no credibility. He thought the Tánaiste's handling of the Anglo-Irish Conference had been just right - doing his job, but properly sceptical. He stressed the importance of the Irish

Government keeping a focus on the situation, in spite of Presidency, etc. demands. He asked where the talks were likely to go.

17. Mr. Teahon said there were two basic scenarios possible: The more optimistic of the two envisaged that the British Government would put pressure on Trimble to short circuit the present procedural wrangles, including on the decommissioning issue, so that when the talks resumed in September they could go straight into substantive negotiations in the three strands and on the sub-committee on decommissioning. That would require Trimble to dissociate from Paisley and McCartney. The second scenario, if none of these things happened, involved Mitchell saying to the Governments that the talks were going nowhere and drawing the consequences.
18. Mr. Teahon said he had been pressing Mr. Holmes to get the British to talk to Sinn Féin at official level. This had not been ruled out, but there was a degree of bemusement in British circles on whether the formulas put to them to secure a renewed IRA ceasefire would in fact work. Major felt some need for reassurance that it would be safe to have such a meeting.
19. Mr. Adams thought the British should be testing the propositions put to them. In some ways there were now strengthened strategic reasons why the IRA should be on a ceasefire basis. The IRA would want to be in a defensive position. There was no doubt the previous week had given comfort to the physical force people. There was however a sense of fluidity. He had spoken to "seasoned activists" in Belfast and everyone held the same view. They had narrowed the IRA requirements down to assurances on the three points (meaningful talks, no pre-conditions, timeframe). If the IRA had satisfaction on these three points they would have a positive attitude. There was now a small window of opportunity which should be tested. Fr. Alex