

The International Body

Meeting with Representatives of Sinn Fein

January 12, 1996

Dublin

Participants: Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness, Lucelita Breatnach

Summary

Representatives of Sinn Fein told the International Body that no side would willingly give up its weapons, including the British; stated that the British had raised the possibility of destruction of paramilitary weapons by the paramilitaries themselves in discussions with Sinn Fein in 1995; asserted that decommissioning is, however, a red herring because the British oppose change; stated that those who prevent peaceful change spawn change through violence; and agreed to the principles of the use of exclusively peaceful means and acceptance of any outcome of a negotiated settlement.

Account of Meeting

Adams said that those with weapons will not give them up to the enemy. This applies not just to the IRA but to the whole range of those with weapons. The British Army should go back to where it belongs and the RUC should become a normal police force. Those with licensed weapons should be under control. We see this as the core of a sensible and positive way forward.

In response to Prime Minister Holkeri's question about the significance of the reference in Sinn Fein's submission to the IB about the possibility of destruction of weapons by the paramilitaries themselves, McGuinness said he was involved in talks with Secretary of State Mayhew in the spring of 1995 during which the British made a number of suggestions, including disposal of weapons by those in possession. The media has obviously recognized the significance of our contribution. The evidence proves, however, that decommissioning is a red herring. Trimble refuses to do anything on the political track.

Adams said we cannot go any further than we have in our submission. We have to stay in touch with our base. In no other conflict situation has one party surrendered its weapons before a political solution was agreed. There has to be an understanding that the British are not a neutral party. Unionist positions are shaped by the attitudes of the British. Why should Trimble move if Major always says no? Those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change the reality. We can resolve these problems if we can get around the table.

McGuinness said the process of negotiations was a dangerous road for us to go. The British Government has the resources to crush people like us. The British game is all about preventing change, not decommissioning. If we go any further we may destroy ourselves and therefore any hope for the peace process.



Adams explained that any major IRA decision would require approval by its convention, a rare and momentous occasion. We do not condone punishment beatings. Had there been progress on policing, the problem of "punishment beatings" would not be as acute. Sinn Fein is not involved in the commission of "punishment beatings" and is trying to stop them.

Adams and McGuinness affirmed that Sinn Fein accepts exclusive use of peaceful means and the outcome of any negotiated settlement

McGuinness told the International Body that so far as its weapons, including the British, the IRA has raised the possibility of destruction of paramilitaries themselves in discussions. McGuinness asserted that decommissioning is, however, a British oppose change; stated that those who want to change through violence, and agreed to the use of exclusively peaceful means and the outcome of a negotiated settlement.

Adams said that those with weapons will not give them up to the British. He said that the IRA but to the whole range of weapons. The British Army should go back to where it was and the IRA should become a normal police force. Those with weapons should be under control. We see this as the core of a viable and peaceful way forward.

In response to Prime Minister Hailken's question about the significance of the reference in Sinn Fein's submission to the IB about the possibility of destruction of weapons by the paramilitaries themselves, McGuinness said he was involved in talks with Secretary of State Mayhew in the spring of 1995 during which the British made a number of suggestions, including disposal of weapons by those in possession. The IRA has obviously recognised the significance of the contribution. The evidence shows, however, that decommissioning is a red herring. The IRA refuses to do anything on the political track.

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McGuinness said the process of negotiations was a dangerous one for the IRA. The British Government has the resources to crush people like us. The British game is all about preventing change, not about achieving it. If we go any further we may destroy ourselves and therefore any hope for the peace process.