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CC Taoiseach
but he's healthy
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~~Mr P Murray~~
Mr P Feilich
Mr J Dalton
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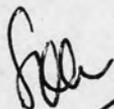
Meeting with Fr. Alex Reid,
Dublin, 16 January, 1995

1. Fr. Alex Reid called to see me on 16th January. (Beginning with the IRA ceasefire in August, we have met at fairly regular intervals on the broad issues relating to the peace process).
2. He repeated the arguments, which would be familiar from other contacts with him, that Sinn Fein had persuaded the IRA to end its violence on the basis that there was an alternative political strategy, in cooperation with other nationalist groupings. It was important that nothing should happen which appeared to undermine that assumption. For that reason he hoped there would be the greatest possible measure of agreement, not only between nationalist parties in Northern Ireland, but between parties in this jurisdiction also. I reassured him that the Taoiseach's attitude was very much aimed at consensual politics and that he would be in contact with the Opposition Leaders on Northern Ireland shortly.
3. He referred to the constructive contacts that Gerry Adams had had with the Taoiseach and wanted the Government to be aware of the full text of what Mr. Adams had said on 15th January, and also the statement they were making to the British side in their contacts today (both texts attached).
4. He said Gerry Adams was particularly concerned at the danger that the weapons issue would cause a total stand-off. Fr. Reid gave it as his own opinion that "in the real world" it would not be possible to persuade the IRA to give up their weapons, and certainly not at a preliminary stage. Adams would suffer a severe reverse if he tried to do so, but was

very anxious however to "find a way around this issue". It would be disastrous if negotiations were launched on foot of the Joint Framework Document which excluded Sinn Fein.

5. I said that I felt the acknowledgement of Sinn Fein influence on the decommissioning of weapons, and the mention, however guarded, that "we wished to use our influence on all matters in a positive way" was a helpful advance on the position adopted at the last meeting when they had refused to accept a paper. Fr. Reid said that the Sinn Fein refusal to accept the paper reflected the fact that Sinn Fein had felt that session "had been like Castlereagh" - a very aggressive interrogation about Sinn Fein's intentions on the weapons issue. As the paper dealt exclusively with that issue, they had felt it necessary, to make the point about a wider agenda, to hand it back. The current British presentation put it in a wider context, and therefore they would be in a position to accept it.

6. Adams was supposed to ring Fr. Reid with a read-out on today's meeting for our benefit. He had not however done so by the time Fr. Reid left.



Sean O hUiginn
Second Secretary
16 January, 1995

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Telephone call from Mr. Gerry Adams

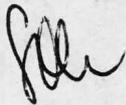
16 January, 1995

1. Mr. Adams rang after Fr. Reid had departed. He asked to speak to me and gave the following overview of their meeting with the British.
2. He said the meeting had lasted longer than anticipated, and hence his failure to make contact with Fr. Reid.
3. The British gave them a document, which they will fax to us. At a cursory glance, Mr. Adams felt it contained one valuable point: It went in the direction of saying that the decommissioning of arms was not a precondition. He felt it would be useful if the Irish Government were able to welcome this. However Mr. Adams felt that the British side were misrepresenting the Taoiseach's position as having said in Downing Street that the decommissioning issue had to be dealt with in an early phase of discussions.
4. I said that the fact that the British paper had been accepted, and that Sinn Fein acknowledged, however guardedly, the possibility of using its influence in a constructive way on this issue, was undoubtedly an advance on the previous meeting and I felt the Government would welcome it. However, it was clear there were still very difficult issues down the road on this issue. Adams acknowledged this latter point.
5. On the meeting more generally, Adams said they had raised a number of specific questions with the British. The British had given "a deliberately waffling response" on a number of them, which had contributed to the length of the meeting. They had refused to give any indication of when they were

*conveyed orally
to Mr. Seaton.
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prepared to move to the next phase. Sinn Fein would give a more considered view of the British responses through Fr. Reid at a later date.

6. Mr. Adams summarised his preliminary assessment of today's meeting as having afforded apparent movement on the issue of decommissioning of arms not being a precondition, which was welcome, but as one of frustration for Sinn Fein in all other areas.



Sean O hUiginn
Second Secretary
16 January, 1995



Sinn Féin

...news release...

For immediate release
15th January 1995

Britain must move on talks

On the eve of Sinn Féin's third meeting with British government representatives at Stormont, Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams said:

"Tomorrows meeting with the British government must be seen in the context of the protracted contact and dialogue between Sinn Féin and the British government going back for almost five years. It is worth noting also that almost two years after the public disclosure of agreement between myself and John Hume the British government are still refusing to initiate real peace talks. After all this time this is deplorable.

"There is therefore widespread concern that the peace process is being stalled by the British government on the talks front as well as on other fronts. There is also a universal expectation that the process must move into all party peace talks led by both governments as the necessary next stage in the negotiation of a real and lasting peace settlement in Ireland.

"The most important element in bringing the situation to this point, as is widely acknowledged was the IRA's announcement of August 31, 1994. John Major knows this. Attempts by him therefore to link the issue of IRA weapons to his continued refusal to recognise the rights of the Sinn Féin electorate are disingenuous. In my view the British governments position on the decommissioning of IRA weapons is a ploy, at best a stalling tactic, at worst an attempt to create and sustain a crisis around this issue.

"The real issue is the British governments refusal to move to peace talks and to recognise Sinn Féin's mandate. In all of this the British government have used the stance of the Ulster Unionists Party as an excuse. The unionists cannot be given any more vetoes. All vetoes must be removed. The unionists are also now trying to dictate the agenda for any talks. This also must not be permitted. Peace requires fundamental political and constitutional change. Sinn Féin want to see an end to British government involvement in Irish affairs but these are matters for inclusive negotiations. All issues must be on the agenda and all mandated political parties must be involved fully in these negotiations.

"The Sinn Féin position on weapons is transparent. We seek a complete demilitarisation of the situation - the removal forever of all guns, British, unionist, loyalist and republican, from Irish politics. The British government has a leading role to play in this. All parties have an influence. The collective application of that influence can transform the political climate and bring about a lasting peace settlement.

"Sinn Féin wishes to use our influence on all matters in a positive way and with the aim of advancing the peace process. How we use our influence, and how much influence we have, is a matter of judgement for us. Efforts by the British government to subvert the integrity of Sinn Féin's position or the rights of our electorate, or Mr. Major's refusal to initiate real peace talks will serve only to undermine and subvert the peace process itself."

ENDS

TOWARDS A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT 3

In our opening statement to you, we outlined our view that democratic, political and practical imperatives require the open involvement and inclusion of all political views if a democratic resolution to the conflict is to be sought and achieved. Democratic reasons clearly determine that Sinn Féin's right to represent its electorate and to promote its analysis should be accepted and acted upon immediately and publicly. This is the basis upon which we entered into dialogue.

Sinn Fein has consistently stated, over a protracted period, that we seek a complete demilitarisation of the situation; that we seek the removal forever of all guns - British, unionist, loyalist and republican - from Irish politics.

Everyone has an influence over the present situation. The collective application of that influence can transform the political climate and put an end to the failures of the past.

Only a lasting peace settlement will achieve this and a peace settlement must include the permanent removal of all guns from Irish politics.

The evidence of our sad and tragic history wholly supports that. That is the logic of a peace process.

This is our third meeting with you. It is our opinion that the talks process can and should now move into all party peace talks, led by both governments, as the necessary next stage in the negotiation of a real and lasting political settlement in Ireland. We believe that this opinion is shared by an overwhelming majority of people on these islands and people of goodwill towards the Irish and British peoples in the international community.

The initiative taken by the IRA and the potential that initiative provides to transform Irish society has been universally recognised and welcomed. The Irish and US Governments have already responded positively. The British Government, however has the central role to play in turning the potential for a lasting settlement into a reality. We believe that the British Government has a political and moral responsibility to move us all into the next phase of the peace process.

Sinn Féin wishes to see a lasting settlement based on democratic

principles. In our view this requires that your government ends its involvement in Irish affairs (an involvement which has had destructive and painful consequences for both our peoples) and returns to the Irish people our right to national self-determination. These core political issues are the task of inclusive negotiations.

Inclusive dialogue and negotiations are, therefore, necessary and inevitable if this conflict is to be resolved on a democratic basis. Pre-conditions represent obstacles to peace. They are a distraction from and a barrier to the necessary negotiation.

Inclusive negotiations, without vetoes or preconditions should begin immediately. Sinn Féin, as a democratically mandated political party, must be involved fully in these negotiations.

It is, of course, essential, in this context, that Sinn Féin and our voters are immediately accorded equality of treatment.

In addition we are convinced that the political climate would be significantly improved if your government responded positively to the need for a demilitarisation of the situation. You need to show that you are committed to the peace process. The announcement on Thursday 12th January of a curtailment of British Army operations in Belfast is a welcome step in that direction. We are concerned, however, that British military operations, including the activities of the RUC, have continued unchanged in some areas. In fact, in some areas, most noticeably South Armagh, the actions of your military forces have been increased. A complete end to British military operations and the speedy release of all political prisoners, for example, would greatly assist the peace process. While such issues are not, and should not be, preconditions to inclusive dialogue, we would again urge you to address them as a matter of urgency.

The most urgent task facing the people of Ireland and Britain is to advance the peace process setting democracy, equality, justice and political stability as its clear objectives. Dialogue and all-embracing negotiations in the context of democratic principles must be the means to that end.

Sinn Féin is fully committed to that position. This was underlined publicly by the Sinn Féin President, Gerry Adams, in a joint statement, issued with the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds and the SDLP leader John Hume on 6th September 1994, which stated:

"We are at the beginning of a new era in which we are totally committed to democratic and peaceful methods of resolving our political problems. We reiterate that our objective is an equitable and lasting agreement that can command the allegiance of all".

In attempting to progress towards that position republicans have consistently demonstrated a willingness to be reasonable and flexible. We are convinced that if the political will exists that we can finally remove the causes of conflict through the achievement of a democratic political settlement. We now have an unprecedented opportunity to build a lasting peace. The effective application for the first time of democratic principles, and the achievement of a political settlement on this basis, is the only way to permanently remove conflict. The potentially historic opportunity which currently exists cannot be lost.

We feel that the issues raised by us in this meeting and at our two previous meetings deserve direct and open responses. In the document which we presented to you at our second meeting on 19th December we asked you the following questions;

1. When do you intend to initiate, with the Dublin government, all party talks?
2. What format will these talks follow?
3. How will the various parties to the negotiations, including the British government, be represented?
4. Where will these talks take place?
5. What time-scale do you envisage for these talks?

We anticipate that you will provide us with answers to these questions at today's meeting.

We also wish to deal with your government's stance on the issue of IRA weapons.

Sinn Féin is totally committed to bringing about the complete and permanent removal of all guns from Irish politics. To bring about, in the word of the British government "the decommissioning" of all weapons of war. Without this commitment the peace process would not have been brought to its present position. The most important element in bringing the situation to this point, as is universally acknowledged, was the IRA's announcement of 31 August 1994. In our view the British government know this.

Attempts, therefore, to link the issue of the IRA's weapons to your continued refusal to recognise the rights of the Sinn Féin electorate are disingenuous. We are concerned, therefore, that the British government's position on the decommissioning of IRA weapons is, at best, a stalling tactic, at worst an attempt to create a situation of crisis in the peace process around the issue. This must be avoided. Our position on this matter is transparent. We wish to use our influence on all matters, in a positive way and with the aim of advancing the peace process. How we use our influence and how much influence we have is a matter of judgement for us.

Be assured of our commitment but be assured also that efforts by you to subvert the integrity of Sinn Féin's position on the rights of our electorate as a pretext for stalling the peace process will serve only to undermine and subvert the peace process itself.

Furthermore, given the public statements made by British Government ministers over the past weeks we would additionally ask you to answer the following questions;

6. Is it the British government's position that the decommissioning of IRA weapons is a precondition to Sinn Féin's involvement in all party negotiations?
7. Is it the British government's position that, unless this issue is dealt with to your satisfaction, that we cannot move to inclusive peace talks and that, consequently, the peace process is at an end?

The British Government has said that other political parties will not agree to Sinn Féin's participation in the negotiation process until the decommissioning of IRA weapons has occurred. In real terms this means that the unionist parties are now being given a veto over Sinn Féin's participation in inclusive peace talks.

8. Is it, therefore, the British government's position that other political parties can exercise a veto over Sinn Féin's involvement in all party negotiations?

16 January 1995