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Reference Code: 2021/97/1

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Meeting with Mr. Pat O' Doherty and Ms. Rita O' Hare, Sinn Fein
31st August, 1995

1. I met last night in the Forum offices at their request with Mr. Pat O' Doherty and Ms. Rita O' Hare of Sinn Fein. Ms. Lucilita Breathnach was present to take a note.
2. Doherty stressed the difficulty which they had with the decommissioning proposals. We should be clear that Mitchell McLoughlin's positive comments were a "mistake". It was very important for Sinn Fein now to have a sense of what was actually happening.
3. I gave them a reasonably open account of the current state of play between the two Governments (without of course showing any texts). While there was no formal agreement, there was a sense of the likely "ball park" on the two parallel tracks. We thought the likely outcome of the Summit looked promising.
4. I stressed for Sinn Fein the very significant advance which we believed was now on offer on round-table talks. I emphasised also the symbolic importance and substance of the trilaterals, not least from a Sinn Fein perspective.
5. On decommissioning I recalled conversations with them some months ago where we had sketched out a strategy of leap-frogging the third Washington condition by a strong emphasis on the first two, and a strong commitment in principle to total decommissioning as part of the process of overall agreement. The Commission was essentially on those lines.

6. I stressed that the fence was now being set very low, in our view, as regards the Commission. That was however two-edged: If Sinn Fein refused engagement with a Commission with such a limited mandate, that would be widely interpreted, both polemically and genuinely, as a refusal of the principle of decommissioning itself.
7. The Sinn Fein side said they would need time and details to try to convince people. They stressed again the hurdles which had to be overcome within their own constituency. I said I was not in a position to show any papers, but if that was crucially important at some subsequent stage, it could be looked at by the Government.
8. Ms. Rita O'Hare contacted me at about 1.45 am to alert me to the IRA statement to be issued for the news bulletins the following morning. She did not however give me details of the statement.
9. Mr. Teahon and I met Mr. Doherty and Ms. O'Hare at Government Buildings shortly after 8.00 am.
10. We made three points relating to the statement:
 - The lack of advance notice would be very unsettling for the Government. We had operated with them on the basis that there should, at a minimum, be no surprises on either side. The Taoiseach and the Tanaiste were taking risks for Sinn Fein, and this sudden statement would make them wonder whether they were fully informed of the context in which these risks were taken.
 - Secondly, the fact of such a statement issued at all would be a reminder that the IRA were still in business. That was bound to have some negative effect.

- Thirdly, any connotation of threat would be absolutely disastrous. Mr. Doherty objected that "disappointment" was very far from a threat, and was the sentiment almost universally shared on the nationalist side.
11. We said we would refrain from any further comment on the substance until we had seen the text. (Sinn Fein did not have it at that point).
 12. The rest of the discussion was taken up with going over again the points we had made about the importance of cooperation with the Commission. We explained that it had been necessary to make a "call" on the date of the Summit, to consolidate potential gains on the political front. In that sense time was very limited.
 13. Sinn Fein questioned how much of the decisions had been taken. We said that the headline decisions - political talks, fact of the Commission, likely Chairman Senator Mitchell, etc. - were now broadly assumed between both Governments, and it would be a major upheaval to re-open them. However, much detail remained to be filled in. If there were details which made a crucial difference for the Republicans, we would be glad to consider them, ideally before a likely meeting between Sir Patrick Mayhew and the Tanaiste on Monday.
 14. Sinn Fein complained about press spins, in particular RTE. We said the Irish presentation of the Summit would seek to underline very heavily that the outcome of the Summit was significant political movement, with decommissioning in its proper perspective as an enabling development for politics.

15. At the end of the meeting we again urged Sinn Fein to do their utmost to secure a favourable reaction to the Commission before the Summit. That would strengthen our hand with the British side.

Sean O hUiginn
1 September 1995

Enc: IRA statement

OGLAIGH NA h-ÉIREANN

STATEMENT FROM THE LEADERSHIP OF OGLAIGH NA h-ÉIREANN
1.9.95

On August 31st 1994 the leadership of OGLAIGH NA h-ÉIREANN announced a complete cessation of military operations in order to enhance the democratic peace process. We took that course, and have abided by it, because we believed that an opportunity had been created to achieve a just and lasting peace. That belief was shared by a broad spectrum of popular and political opinion in Ireland and internationally.

We also stated the obvious commonsense reality that a solution will only be found as a result of inclusive negotiations. We noted that others, and especially the British government, have a duty to face up to their responsibilities.

Regrettably, and after a full year, this opportunity has not been grasped by the British government. It is a matter of concern that the British have succeeded only in preventing movement towards a resolution.

Amongst other diversions, London is using the Unionists' political intransigence as an excuse for its own refusal to move.

Irish Republicans recognise that a lasting peace settlement must involve all the Irish people and will require a democratic accommodation among all the people of this island.

We remain committed to Irish Republican ideals and political objectives. We have faced up to our responsibilities. The failure of John Major's government to face up to its responsibilities is the source of deepening disappointment to all who seek a just and lasting settlement.

p O'Neill
Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, Dublin