



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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1 Mr Murray

[You may have seen already]

SECRET

2 Mr Carbon Meeting between the Taoiseach and Sinn Féin President,  
15 Oct Adams Government Buildings, 2 November, 1995

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1. Following is a summary report of the key points arising at this meeting, which lasted for three hours. ~~A list of those present is attached.~~
  
2. Mr. Adams said that, based on the Tánaiste's 11 October meeting with Mr. McGuinness and the Taoiseach's public comments since then, his sense was that the Government had rejected these proposals. The Taoiseach responded that the Government had not rejected the proposals. However, they had concerns with certain aspects of them and the Tánaiste had conveyed these quite fully on 11 October. The Taoiseach elaborated on these concerns, which related to the idea of a specific date as opposed to a target date for all-party talks, the need to ensure that the International Body received the authoritative views of the organisations holding arms and the question of the equivalence of weapons.
  
3. Mr. Adams emphasised that his success persuading the IRA to accept the twin-track approach had been critically dependent on the setting of a date for all-party talks. It had taken a lot of lobbying and messing on his part to get the IRA to agree. Subsequently, the summit had "failed". His purpose in developing the proposals in question with Mr. Hume and in seeking a joint meeting with the Government had been to try to move matters on. However, it now appeared that the (idea of a) date had moved backwards.
  
4. The Taoiseach asked what Mr. Adams meant by this. Mr. Adams said that the British Government were quoting the Irish Government in support of their position. The Taoiseach objected that "the Devil can quote Scripture". Sinn Féin could be in no doubt as to the Irish Government's concerns, which he had explained to Sinn Féin time out number, including in his letter to Mr. Adams in July, while on holiday in France.

5. Mr. Adams said that the situation had moved from the position that both Governments were committed to encouraging and facilitating all parties to engage in talks. Everyone accepted that the British Government were stalling.
6. The Taoiseach said that it would be impossible to reach an agreement without the Unionists. Mr. Adams said that he accepted that the Taoiseach had set out his concerns before. However, there was a difference in doing this privately and in doing it publicly. The Taoiseach said that saying something in public as opposed to privately could not be represented as a change in position. He asked Mr. Adams to outline his concerns about what he had been saying.
7. Mr. Adams said that it was now clear that the Irish Government was either not keen to set a date for all party talks or was afraid that, if this was done, the Unionists would not turn up. The Taoiseach said that this was not true: the Government wanted to set a target date for all party talks. There had been no change in the Government's position since the postponed Summit.
8. The Taoiseach took the opportunity at this point to take issue with the report in the Irish Times (of 2 November) about Sinn Féin concerns about the prospects for a Summit before Clinton's visit. He outlined the circumstances in which he had sought a postponement of the Summit planned for September, drawing on the relevant portion of his speaking note. It was against this background that he was somewhat reluctant to set dates for Summits.
9. The Taoiseach also made the point that, given the political capital expenditure - and the risks - he had been required to undertake on that occasion, he would have expected to have been treated with more respect than to have been requested to have a joint meeting with Sinn Féin and the SDLP at 24 hours notice. The Taoiseach elaborated on the Government's position on the request for the joint meeting and the attendant publicity, again drawing on his speaking note. Mr. Adams outlined the timing of the request for the meeting as he understood it i.e. that greater notice had been given than

24 hours but he accepted that there was obviously a breakdown in communication. Sinn Féin had not been responsible for publicising the Government's refusal to agree to the meeting. The fact was, however, that the refusal had given rise to concerns that the Government was reluctant to offend Unionists.

10. The Taoiseach asked what was wrong about not wanting to offend Unionists. Mr. Adams said that there was nothing wrong in this as such. He had been part of every effort to get Unionists involved. However, it now seemed that Unionists had been given a veto not just on all-party talks but on who the Irish Government could meet. Nationalists in Northern Ireland believed the Taoiseach was making a hames of it. The Taoiseach said that the Government had no objection in principle to joint meetings. However, there was always a danger that people would feel excluded by such meetings and the Taoiseach would not be bounced into a joint meeting, at short notice and with no explanation as to why a meeting was being sought. There was no question of Unionists having a veto on such meetings or on all-party talks.
11. In the course of further exchanges on the joint meeting, Mr. Adams emphasised the difficulties created for Nationalists, living in a foreign jurisdiction, where their leaders were refused access to the Irish Government. He also emphasised the importance for the Irish Government to be seen to move in a situation where the British Government was not moving. It had been an important part of the evolution of Republicanism away from physical force that the Irish Government had a key role to play in resolving the conflict.
12. Mr. Adams referred to the recent meeting between Martin McGuinness and Michael Ancram. Sinn Féin had gone to the meting with a number of clear positions. The British would not move on setting a date. They had refused a target date. When pressed, they had simply said that they would not rule out a target date of some three months time if they had a satisfactory communiqué. They had also made quite clear that all-party talks would only take place if all parties were agreeable and they had handed over a paper (the revised British building blocks paper) which had stated this and with which they had said the Irish Government agreed.

13. The Taoiseach said that this was not the case.
14. Continuing, Mr. Adams said that Mr. McGuinness had indicated at the meeting that Sinn Féin were prepared to deal authoritatively (with the International Body) on the question of IRA weapons and that they had commissioned a paper on this issue. Sinn Féin would be putting forward their analysis that all weapons had to be dealt with but in a way that would so far as possible address British concerns. They accepted that the International Body might not deal with all weapons. Mr. Adams also indicated that Mr. McGuinness had suggested that the terms of reference of the Body would not specify the type of weapons, which would leave the British Government free to qualify the word in whatever way they wanted and for Sinn Féin to do likewise. The British had refused and had emphasised Washington Three. Throughout, the British Government had cited the Irish Government in support of their positions.
15. Mr. Adams said that the British Government had refused to engage from Day One. They now seemed to have neutralised the Irish Government and the whole peace process had been reduced to absolutely nothing. The momentum could not come from Sinn Féin. The question was where could it come from? The British believed they did not need to set a date for all-party talks because of the Taoiseach's concerns about empty chairs. They were quoting the Taoiseach's public statements ad nauseum. Mr. Adams added that the request for a joint meeting remained.
16. The Taoiseach responded by emphasising that the Government wanted to see all parties at the table. Talks would not go very far without the Unionists and they had to be at the table at least at some point. This was not to say that the Unionists had a veto on talks starting. The Government might have to agree to going ahead without them provided everything possible had been done to ensure that they would come in from the start and where it would clearly be unreasonable for them not to. The Taoiseach was willing to put pressure on the Unionists. He was willing to get the Americans to put pressure on the Unionists. He was willing to get the Americans to

get the British to put pressure on the Unionists. But he was only willing to do this on grounds that he deemed were reasonable.

17. The Taoiseach added that if the British Government were suggesting that the Irish Government did not want a date for all-party talks, this was not true. We wanted a target date. Mr. Adams referred again to the building blocks paper. The Taoiseach said that the building blocks document had no standing so far as we were concerned.
18. Mr. Adams said that we were not going to get all-party talks. Neither the British Government nor the Unionists wanted talks and no-one was bringing any pressure on them. The Taoiseach said that, based on his discussions with the British Prime Minister, there was no question that he did not want talks. He repeated that the Government wanted to be seen to have done everything reasonable to ensure all-party talks from the start before exerting maximum pressure. He added that the British tended to take decisions at the last moment.
19. Mr. Adams suggested that the Unionists would not move an inch as long as the British Government could avoid giving them the choice. He accepted that it would be impossible to make peace without the Unionists and without a settlement which they could give their allegiance to. This represented a major shift in Republican thinking. The British were refusing to facilitate/encourage a settlement. They saw all Irish people as subversives. The only difference (between Mr. Adams and the Taoiseach?) was that he was the one with the beard. The Taoiseach took issue with this.
20. Mr. Adams said that most Irish people were philosophical about the British Government. What sustained their confidence was a situation (as earlier?? where "John Bruton is playing a blinder". When the Taoiseach had taken up office, everyone had sighed with relief that he had grasped the ball so quickly. However, (since then?) the peace process had not moved one iota and all the meetings between Sinn Féin and the Government had been bogged down over British conditions, which Sinn Féin had tried to manage.

21. Mr. Teahon raised the failure of Sinn Féin to liaise with Government officials, despite repeated suggestions that a meeting should take place with officials. He also referred to the delay in forwarding Sinn Féin's 6 October proposals, the inadequate briefing which Sinn Féin had given on the recent meeting with Mr. Ancram, and the confusion surrounding Sinn Féin's position on the Tony Lake paper. It was very difficult for the Irish Government to intervene effectively in the discussions between Sinn Féin and the British Government, as Sinn Féin seemed to want them to do, in these circumstances. He added that Messrs Ó hÚiginn and Dalton shared his concern about the apparent reluctance of Messrs. Adams and McGuinness to meet with officials with a view to clear communication. Following protracted and robust exchanges on this issue, Mr. Adams (who characterised the issue as a "false distraction") suggested that the Government side make proposals in due course for ensuring better communication. He also said that Sinn Féin would give a report on the McGuinness/Ancram meeting.
22. In the course of these exchanges, Mr. McAteer emphasised that Sinn Féin were not engaged in drafting a communiqué with the British Government. They were still dealing with concepts and with the general project.
23. Mr. Adams said that the Irish Government needed to use its influence to remove all preconditions and to bring all parties around the table. Sinn Féin were "not hearing this" from the Irish Government. All they heard about was the need to avoid empty chairs and the need for Sinn Féin to speak authoritatively for the paramilitaries. The Taoiseach said that he had no problem in saying publicly the kind of things Mr. Adams was referring to but the circumstances must be right.
24. Mr. Adams repeated that the British Government were not moving and said that he had no confidence that they would. One of the reasons for their failure to move was that they believed they had succeeded in neutralising the Irish Government on the core issues. He also referred to perceptions that the Taoiseach's position was more sensitive to unionists than Nationalists. The Taoiseach responded on the latter point that the Government were trying to get everyone on board. He emphasised that he

was prepared to go to the wire with the British (on calling all-party talks) provided everything possible had been done to bring the Unionists on board from the start. Sinn Féin had addressed the issues raised by the Tánaiste to some degree but we had not yet reached the point where the Taoiseach could go to the Prime Minister with a view to exerting pressure on him.

25. The Taoiseach sought clarification as to Sinn Féin's position on a date for talks. He believed that a reasonably early target date was possible, given that the International Body should be able to complete its work in, say, 6 weeks. He stressed that it could only be a target date, although Governments would be bound to use their best endeavours to meet it.
26. Mr. Adams said that Sinn Féin's position was that the two Governments should announce a date by which all-party talks would take place. He repeated that the British Government was stalling. There should be no doubt but that the peace was not anchored. Republicans that he spoke to did not feel that the peace process was going too slowly: they felt it was going nowhere. We were at a defining moment. The British were not for moving. Physical force republicanism had been reinforced by the British Government's approach. There were two dynamics. The British Government dynamic was not being matched (countered) by constitutional politicians. There was another dynamic coming down the road i.e. physical force. He (Mr. Adams) and Mr. McGuinness could not hold it (forever?). If they (IRA) came to him and said "Gerry, it's over"; he would have to say "Well, you did your best". He was resigned that at some point in the line there would be a blow-up.
27. The Taoiseach asked for Sinn Féin's view on the suggestion in the British building block paper that the Assembly idea could be considered in the political track. He suggested that this could be a way of bringing Unionists on board the twin-track approach. Mr. Adams said that he would object to anything which would elevate Mr. Trimble's idea to a status which it didn't deserve. It would become another hurdle. He said that he would have a problem with the idea. The Taoiseach commented that he felt Mr. Adams was being unreasonable.

28. Mr. Teahon asked whether Sinn Féin would want Washington 3 included in the International Body's remit or left out. Mr. McAteer commented that the International Body was a device to get the British Government off a hook - Sinn Féin did not want the Body as such. Mr. Adams said that Sinn Féin's position was that they wanted all weapons taken out of Irish politics. It was not a question of their wanting Washington 1, 2 or 3 included in the Body's remit. They did not in fact want the Body at all. They were prepared to live with it but their position on the Body was their best shot: it was not negotiable.
29. Mr. Teahon also sought clarification of Mr. Adam's point that the British Building Block paper gave individual parties a veto on all-party talks. Mr. Adams referred to paragraph 4. In effect the British had moved back to a pre-Washington three position. The Taoiseach emphasised that we would not support this.
30. Mr. Adams suggested that the British Government were trying to engineer a situation where David Trimble would get the credit - or blame - depending on what happened in the peace process.
31. The Taoiseach in his concluding remarks said that the Government would have to make the call as to when to make a move. He added that he did not want to be boxed in by the Clinton visit.
32. Before the meeting concluded, Mr. Adams raised the question of IRA deportees in the US. It was agreed that this would be followed up with the US administration.

S. HARE