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SECRET

Meeting with British Prime Minister in Cannes

Mr. Galloway

5.14.30.6.95

OVERVIEW

Mr. Hafe

Alan the other 27

Per 6/95

Key Objective

1. The key objective of the meeting will be to persuade the British to move away from their present position of treating decommissioning in effect as a pre-condition for political talks.
2. We wish them instead to adopt a policy of pursuing these issues in parallel.
3. Given the Tory leadership contest, it would probably be unrealistic to expect anything more than "flagging" issues at political level in Cannes, with agreement that officials should consider the issues and report back in some weeks.
4. Prime Minister Major will presumably want to avoid any negative connotations in his Irish agenda just now, so that, whatever frank signals may have to be given in private, the public presentation should be an upbeat message of close cooperation and the hope of steady progress.

Other Points

5. In addition to this overall goal, the Taoiseach may also need to reiterate our concerns that there should be progress in other areas - in particular prison issues - and to warn against complacency about the peace process.
6. While there is not a crisis now, any attempt simply to mesh the ceasefires with the status quo will produce a crisis at some point. The Republican movement needs to be able to

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point to some political change to rationalise and consolidate their shift from violence to politics. A sense that a genuine and reasonable effort for peace by the Republican movement had been treated dismissively could be a very potent argument for sceptical hardliners waiting in the wings to break the ceasefire.

7. To avoid any impression that our concerns on the Clegg case have gone away, it may be necessary to touch on it in private, while minimising any public controversy about it in Mr. Major's present circumstances.

Decommissioning

8. In order to persuade the British to change gear on this issue, it may be necessary to
 - (a) stress a handover gesture is not deliverable at present;
 - (b) give a strong private signal that we will not support them in making a political road-block of the issue;
 - (c) point to a more realistic way of achieving this important common objective.

Not deliverable at present

- Sinn Fein leaders feel they strained their credit to the utmost to secure the ceasefire. Their followers are already chafing at the lack of political response by the British.
- They cannot at present deliver what, on any analysis, is a huge further move, particularly in a political vacuum.

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- Handing over weapons is the last act before disbandment of the IRA. They can rationalise that only as the response to political change.
- A dissident rump hostile to the ceasefire could quickly assume a formidable dynamic of its own, if it persuaded the republican community that the ceasefire was being treated as an abject surrender.
- Since voluntary decommissioning requires the cooperation of hardliners, we must have persuasion and reassurance as well as pressure.
- The way the decommissioning debate has developed, may perversely have hardened attitudes, since the almost exclusive focus on weapons has created the impression that Britain is fixated on a security rather than a political agenda.
- We need to shift the focus from decommissioning as a pre-condition for beginning talks, (which is not attainable) to decommissioning as a pre-condition for concluding talks. (which we hope can be attained).

No political road-block

- The Taoiseach has supported the British in exerting the strongest possible pressure on the paramilitaries on this issue, and in persuading the US to do likewise.
- However, he has said from the outset that the peace process must not be a one-item agenda: The over-emphasis on decommissioning risks making it so.
- Consequently the Irish Government will be making very clear that decommissioning, while a very important objective, must

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not be treated as a pre-condition or road-block in the way of talks.

- We must get away from the circular argument whether decommissioning is reached through political progress, or vice versa.
- We will instead be emphasising very strongly the need for parallel progress on both issues, which creates movement in both, and a positive as opposed to the present negative interaction between them.
- We hope the British Government will be able to follow us in this line, since we would deplore any gap between the two Governments on such an important issue.

More realistic ways of achieving this objective

- We believe we have persuaded Sinn Fein of the importance of addressing this issue seriously and they will examine how progress might be made in this area.
- Their dismissal of any gesture or handover, has prejudiced their reaction to the debate as a whole.
- We have sought to persuade them to discuss modalities on a contingent basis. They have resisted because they feel this would lead inexorably to the "gesture" or other demands.
- We believe our immediate objective should be agreement in principle and on a contingent basis on how decommissioning would be handled in the context of an overall agreement.
- One idea we would like considered is some form of international agency or commission, which would supply a

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neutral reference point for all protagonists, and which might draw up and secure agreement on such a contingent plan.

- We would like this idea examined in the Dalton/Chilcot group and to have a report for fuller consideration between the Governments in a matter of weeks.
- We would like the group also to develop a common view as between the two Governments on the preferred modalities etc. of decommissioning.
- The overall goal would be to seek contingent agreement by the paramilitaries to some realistic scheme.

Unionist position on dialogue

- That would reassure unionists and others that they were not being invited to negotiate under the shadow of weaponry, and would transform decommissioning from a road-block to an incentive for dialogue.
- As regards unionists negotiating under threat of violence, it is more likely, when all parties are around the table on an expressly political basis, that the pressures would be the other way and Sinn Fein would find it very difficult to play any violent card.
- The key difficulty at the moment is that the two unionist parties refuse to come to the negotiating table. They alone refuse comprehensive negotiations.
- The importance of the peace process transcends merely unionist interests. It affects all our peoples and both islands.

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- We must develop both incentives and pressures to encourage the unionist political leadership to face up to their responsibilities in this area.
- The Liaison Group should be asked to consider various options how this might be done and report to us within a few weeks.
- The essential goal is to consolidate the peace process through political agreement.

OTHER ISSUES

- There is a manifest nervousness in Sinn Fein circles about what their followers see as a lack of response to the ceasefires.
- They seem particularly worried about the debate which may spring up around the anniversary of the ceasefire.
- Decommissioning and political progress are obviously extremely complicated issues: We should however look at other areas where we can send positive signals as of now.
- The renewal of the EPA in its entirety, and the indication that new emergency legislation will be enacted before the whole question of emergency legislation will be reviewed, sent an unfortunate signal ten months into the ceasefire.

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Prisons Issues

- The prisons issue is the one which touches the republican community most directly through the families:
- We would urge again to look at the option of 50% remission, which is simply a reversion to the status quo which prevailed during most of the terrorist campaign (up to 1989).
- Since we do not believe a "hand-over gesture" is realistic at the present time, it does not make sense to make progress in this area conditional on arms decommissioning. Ironically, such a trade-off would be even more offensive to republican prisoners than it would be to Tory backbenchers.
- Some movement for early release of prisoners in Northern Ireland is a key and emotive issue for the republican and the Loyalist sides.
- It would strengthen our hand vis-a-vis Sinn Fein in many areas if the British Government were seen to make an imaginative response in this area.

Prisoners in Britain

9. The two main problems at present are:

- (1) the recent announcement on closed visits
- (2) the delay with further transfers to Northern Ireland

(Note: a closed visit means a glass partition between the prisoner and visitors, thereby eliminating completely all opportunity for physical contact).

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- We appreciate the assistance of the Home Office on various difficulties which arose with IRA prisoners. It is in everyone's interest to defuse these difficulties.
- However, the Home Secretary's announcement this week that closed visits would be introduced for "exceptional risk" Category A prisoners is likely to cause severe difficulties.
- Eight prisoners (five at Belmarsh, three at Full Sutton) will be affected. We understand that neither the prisoners nor their families will accept visits under these conditions.
- In addition to this, further restrictive security measures are to be introduced for all Category A prisoners (stricter searches for visitors etc.). These may cause confrontational situations (especially at Belmarsh, Full Sutton, Whitmoor).
- We are very worried that the new arrangements may upset the recent understandings arrived at in relation to careful handling of visits, access to recreational facilities, better meal arrangements etc.
- We hope this issue can be handled sensitively, with due regard for the importance of the prisoners issue in republican psychology.
- We hope that the very constructive approach on the transfer of prisoners will continue and will not be adversely affected by the new regulations.

Clegg

- The Irish Government has not taken a position on merits of the Clegg case: We are happy to leave that to due process.

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- However, due process, or executive action taken afterwards, must be the same for all. There must not be one law for security personnel and another for everyone else.
- We appreciate the emotions this case arouses in Britain, but it must be understood the issue is equally emotive, in a different way, in Ireland.
- We hope the implications of this will be given due weight, and that the same regime will be seen to be valid for all.

Department of Foreign Affairs

23 June, 1995