



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/98/2

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Accession Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Private Secretary,  
The Taoiseach may wish to note.  
S. Dave.

(14)  
SECRET

***Taoiseach's meeting with Representatives of Americans for  
a New Irish Agenda,  
Friday, 28 June, 1996***

1. Following is a summary report of this meeting. A list of those present is attached.
2. Opening the meeting, the Taoiseach indicated that he wanted it to be clearly understood that it was a lie to say, as Mr. Adams was saying, that the Government had closed off communication with Sinn Féin. Quite the contrary, the last phone contact with Sinn Féin had been initiated on behalf of the Government. Sinn Fein had been told on that occasion that the Government would consider a further official-level meeting provided they could be satisfied that such a meeting would lead to a restoration of the ceasefire. It was highly ominous that Mr. Adams was saying things which he knew to be untrue.
3. The Taoiseach indicated that one of the reasons why he had put the two questions to Sinn Féin was to enable the line of communication to remain open, against a background where he had to have regard to the feelings of the very large constituency which he represented (and which was strongly opposed to physical force). He had not wanted to cut off contact with Sinn Féin, although he had contemplated it. Even then, he had never contemplated cutting off contact without giving due warning.  
It was a malicious falsehood to suggest that contact had been cut off.

4. Continuing, the Taoiseach indicated that it was equally untrue that he had lost his commitment to the peace process, as Mr. Adams had also suggested. It was entirely out of order for Mr. Adams to suggest this. He and the Government had gone to enormous lengths to maintain contact with Sinn Féin both before and even after the breakdown of the ceasefire and the renewed campaign of violence - something which no Irish Government had ever done before as far back as the 1920's.
  
5. The Taoiseach referred to the strong criticism which had been made of his stance by people - many of them well-intentioned and good people - who were sympathetic to Mr. Adams. Such people were saying that by putting hard questions to Sinn Féin, the Taoiseach was putting Mr. Adams in a very difficult situation, given that it was not possible for him to say that he did not support the armed struggle. The reality, however, was that the Mitchell principles required parties to renounce for themselves and to oppose any effort by others to use force or threaten to use force to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations. In other words, the Mitchell principles required Sinn Féin to say what the Taoiseach was asking them to say. It was quite wrong to suggest, therefore, that the Taoiseach was asking impossible questions.
  
6. The Taoiseach said that he had made the same point as above to the US Ambassador in the morning. He was not introducing a new precondition. The same questions as he had asked were already there and they were going to have to be answered by Sinn Féin in any event, within 24 hours of their entering negotiations.

7. The Taoiseach indicated that he had felt it important to put specific questions to Sinn Féin, rather than phrasing the questions in a general way. In indicating their willingness to accept the Mitchell principles, Sinn Féin had put it in terms of saying that if the British Government etc. could accept the principles, so could Sinn Féin. This suggested that they considered the Mitchell principles to be somewhat of an empty formula. This was not the case, however, so far as the Government were concerned. The fact that Sinn Féin seemed to be so shocked that they should be asked the questions which they had been asked was very disquieting: if they had meant what they had said in indicating their willingness to accept the Mitchell principles, they should have found the questions perfectly understandable.
  
8. The Taoiseach indicated that we accepted that Mr. Adams had a very difficult task to do. We did not want to make it more difficult for him. The reality, however, was that it was the IRA which was making things more difficult. There was also the reality that once a date for all-party talks was fixed and once the conditions for talks had been settled, Sinn Féin was always going to have to face the moment of truth in relation to the Mitchell principles. Sinn Féin's evident unpreparedness in this regard suggested a deficiency on the part of their political leadership, in terms of their failure to deal with a problem which was clearly going to have to be confronted. To suggest that it was not yet possible for Sinn Féin to do this - because of communications difficulties- begged the question as to what they had been doing in the time since the Mitchell Report had been published. Sinn Féin had indicated in effect that once the talks had started and provided the other parties were prepared to sign up to the

Mitchell principles, they would be prepared to do likewise. That moment was now. Concluding his opening remarks, the Taoiseach indicated that he was very concerned that in attacking him, Mr. Adams was seeking to build an alibi for what was about to happen (i.e. more violence).

9. Mr. O' Dowd said that his group had had a meeting with Sinn Féin earlier in the day and would be meeting them again the following day. They had been told by Sinn Féin, very specifically, that 85% of the IRA, including the leadership, would support another ceasefire. There was a problem with the 15%, part of which related to the Mitchell principles. Mr. O' Dowd mentioned in this regard that Mr. Adams would be facing a big problem over the week-end when he would have to explain his position on the Mitchell principles at a meeting of the Sinn Féin cumann in Dublin. He added that he believed Mr. Adams would be prepared to walk away from the 15% on the basis of a reiteration of what the Taoiseach had said in Finglas and/or what Mr. Major had said in his I.T./B.T. article.
  
10. The Taoiseach indicated that while he stood over the Finglas speech, it would be impossible for him to make another such speech in the wake of the killing of Garda McCabe. Mr. O' Dowd said that he appreciated what the Taoiseach was saying and the pressure he was under. His group had believed on the basis of Mr. Adams' statement on the Mitchell principles; Sinn Féin's success in the recent elections; and what Sinn Féin had told people in the US that there was going to be a renewed ceasefire. Americans too had been very taken back by recent events. Mr. O' Dowd

concluded by indicating that the point his group wanted to make was that they did not think it was productive for Mr. Adams to be attacking the Taoiseach or vice versa.

11. The Taoiseach responded that it was Mr. Adams who had attacked him immediately after Question Time on Tuesday, where the Taoiseach had indicated that the channel of communication remained open; and that further, on Thursday evening, Mr. Adams had claimed that communication had been cut off and that the Taoiseach had given up on the peace process. Mr. O' Dowd indicated that he would take this up with Mr. Adams when he met him on Saturday. The Taoiseach mentioned that he had prepared an article for the Irish News rebutting Mr. Adams' claims but that he had decided in the event not to go ahead with it, as he did not want to prolong the exchanges.
  
12. Mr. O' Dowd said that his view was that Mr. Adams was prepared to face down the 15%. He had told Mr. O' Dowd's group very bluntly that he had the IRA in a corner and that he wanted to put them out of business. Mr. O' Dowd added that he did not know why the bombing in Manchester had taken place. The Taoiseach drew attention also to the arms find in Clonaslee. Mr. O' Dowd responded that his group had been dealing with Sinn Féin for 6/7 years and had always found them to be honest. If they were mistaken about Sinn Féin, they would obviously have to pull out. Repeating that the 15% were the problem, Mr. O' Dowd said that his group believed that they needed Mr. Adams and would continue to work with him (to bring about a restoration).

13. Mr. Flynn said that he guaranteed that his group would take up with Mr. Adams the business about there being no communication. He commented that he had always found Mr. Adams to be honest. Mr. Flynn continued that he believed that this was our last shot (for peace). If Mr. Adams went for a ceasefire and there was another "play" by his opponents, he would go down and there would be another 25 years of violence under a new leadership. We should be doing everything we could to help Mr. Adams prevail. Mr. Flynn commented that the current difficulties were the product of years of mistrust. He concluded that he was bothered by what the Taoiseach had said about Mr. Adams making statements which were untrue. The Taoiseach drew attention to the transcript of his responses to questions and supplementaries on 25 June, where he had indicated that lines of communication with Sinn Féin remained open. Copies of the transcript were supplied to the group for reference.
14. Mr. Teahon, in support of what the Taoiseach had been saying, recalled that he had spoken to Ms. O' Hare of Sinn Féin a week ago and at the end of their conversation, Ms. O' Hare had said she would be back early the following week. This was against a background where Mr. Teahon had said that if Ms. O' Hare were to come back with something relevant to an early and direct restoration of the ceasefire, we would listen.
15. Mr. Teahon, continuing, said that in fairness to the Government's position, there was no point in having meetings for the sake of having meetings. He added that officials had held a series of meetings with Sinn Féin where they had set out in great detail what Government policy

was etc. At the end of this series of meetings, the Sinn Féin side had said that they now had a basis for going back to the IRA.

16. Mr. O' Dowd commented that his group had been told the same thing.
17. Mr. Teahon pointed that it was hard to square recent events with what Mr. O' Dowd was saying about 85% of the IRA being in favour of a renewed ceasefire. He added that he had been in London during the week and that the clear view of the British was that the IRA were moving back to a full-scale resumption. The Taoiseach suggested that Mr. Adams' recent two statements attacking him supported this view.
18. Mr. O' Dowd said that there was no guarantee that there would not be further acts of violence. He felt that we might be in a race against time. He added that he believed Mr. Adams was very close to leaving the 15% behind and that Mr. Adams felt he could do this without the risk of a split.
19. Mr. O' Dowd also said that the opposition to a renewed ceasefire was coming from the South. The IRA in the North were committed to a ceasefire. It was other people - the sunshine soldiers - who presented the problem.
20. Mr. O' Dowd emphasised that unlike the lead-up to the previous ceasefire, Mr. Adams was working on both the grassroots and the leadership levels. On the previous occasion, he had concentrated solely

on the leadership level. Mr. Adams had been working very hard to this end both this week and the preceding week.

21. Mr. Flynn indicated that a lot of people were in the same boat as the Government (in terms of the dilemma presented by recent events). The Taoiseach commented that the bombing of Dhahran could not have made it any easier for the US administration to maintain contact with Sinn Féin. Mr. Teahon suggested that it would be worth reinforcing this point in the course of the ANIA group's discussions with Sinn Féin, as it was possible that Sinn Féin did not fully understand where President Clinton was coming from. Mr. Teahon also referred to the difficulties which would be presented if there were further acts of violence. Mr. O' Dowd agreed - "One more bomb and we're gone".
- 

Osnabrook

- 177  
22. Mr. Flynn said that Americans were following the Government's line. No contributions were being made to Sinn Féin. Mr. Flynn mentioned in this regard that he himself had never contributed to Sinn Féin - nor would he. He added that he hoped the Taoiseach was wrong in saying that Mr. Adams had been lying. He himself trusted Mr. Adams but if he were ever to lie to him on one solitary thing he (Mr. Flynn) would never be back to Ireland.

23. The Taoiseach indicated that what he was saying was that it was not true to say, as Mr. Adams had said, that there was no communication and that the Taoiseach had lost interest in restoring the ceasefire. The Taoiseach added that it was possible that Mr. Adams had some reason or other for doing this. Mr. O' Dowd suggested that Mr. Adams might be

deliberately playing tough for reasons of internal tactics. The Taoiseach commented that this was a possibility.

24. The Taoiseach indicated that, as he saw it, the sequence surrounding a restoration of the ceasefire was as follows: the restoration of the ceasefire, subscription to the Mitchell principles and a response to the questions which had been put to Sinn Féin. He added that Sinn Féin would necessarily have to give answers to these questions to their supporters if the campaign of violence was really over.
25. Mr. O' Dowd said that Mr. Adams had backed the IRA into a corner and had asked them to explain what 25 more years of violence would achieve. The IRA were not stupid people. The Taoiseach commented that the people who had been making bombs at Clonaslee were clearly not stupid - it was a very hi-tech operation.
26. Mr. O' Dowd said that he understood the pressure we were under. He repeated that he hoped the personal exchanges between the Taoiseach and Mr. Adams could be brought to an end. The peace process needed both the Taoiseach and Mr. Adams. The Taoiseach pointed out that he was in a position to bring in, in support of the peace process, a section of opinion which was probably the majority opinion here. If he were to say that he accepted Mr. Adams' bona fides, this section of opinion would buy in. First, however, he had to be satisfied on this score.
27. Mr. Flynn said that Mr. Adams needed the Taoiseach and the Taoiseach needed Mr. Adams if he was to secure his place in history. The

Taoiseach indicated that he was not concerned about having a place in history.

28. Mr. O' Dowd asked if the condition for Sinn Féin's entry into negotiations was a restoration of the IRA ceasefire. The Taoiseach responded that nothing had changed in this regard - although he was glad that he had not been asked this question, as it was awkward. The Taoiseach added that this of course presupposed that nothing else happened. Mr. O' Dowd indicated that this was an important piece of clarification on the part of the Taoiseach, as Sinn Féin seemed to believe that the condition for entry had in fact changed.
29. Mr. O' Dowd took up an earlier reference by the Taoiseach to a permanent ceasefire. The Taoiseach emphasised that the Mitchell principles meant that the ceasefire had to be permanent - if Sinn Féin were wriggling on this point, it would be best for the group to go back to America (a reference to earlier remarks by Messrs. O' Dowd and Flynn). The Taoiseach recalled that text of the Mitchell principles to illustrate his point.
30. Mr. O' Dowd commented that we were dealing with a background of mistrust. The Taoiseach said that the Mitchell principles had to be faced. Mr. O' Dowd said that he did not think Sinn Fein had a problem with the Mitchell principles. The Taoiseach objected that of necessity - if they were to take the principles seriously - they would have to have a problem with them. Mr. O' Dowd responded that if there was a

ceasefire, Sinn Féin would obviously not have a problem with the principles.

31. Mr. Teahon, in support of the Taoiseach, pointed out that during the previous ceasefire, the IRA had been carrying out targeting, weapons development and punishment beatings. They would not be able to do this the next time around, as it was part of the package which had been put together with the British that any party which was found in breach of the Mitchell principles would be expelled from the negotiations. Mr. Teahon indicated that the group should emphasise this to Sinn Féin.
32. Mr. O' Dowd suggested the ongoing activity by the IRA during the previous ceasefire was related to the British Government's failure to move over an 18 month period. Mr. Teahon responded that no-one would be doing Sinn Féin any favours if they suggested that they could have a ceasefire but at the same time that the IRA could engage in the same activities as before: the first punishment beating would lead to Sinn Féin's expulsion from the negotiations.
33. Mr. O' Dowd referred to the fact that people had been prepared to talk to the loyalist parties despite the fact that the UDA had carried out a £1 million robbery. The Taoiseach commented that the loyalist parties were enjoying somewhat of a "fools pardon" for the time being by virtue of the fact that Sinn Féin were currently excluded from the talks.

34. Mr. Moran suggested that if change was effected following on a ceasefire and inclusive talks, there would be no problem (in terms of paramilitary activity).
  
35. The Taoiseach was called to another meeting at this point and the meeting concluded shortly afterwards.

S.H.

---

Simon Hare  
2 July, 1996

## *Attendance*

The Taoiseach, Mr. John Bruton, T.D.,

Mr. Paddy Teahon, Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach

Mr. Simon Hare, Principal Officer, Department of the Taoiseach

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Niall O'Dowd, Americans for a New Irish Agenda (ANIA)

Mr. Bill Flynn, ANIA,

Mr. Tom Moran, ANIA.