



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/100/14

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.

Secret

Ms McAndrew
Please give me 1 copy
[Signature]
24.7.98

Meeting with SF, Wednesday, 22 July 1998

A meeting took place at 9am in the Taoiseach's office between Sinn Féin and officials. The SF delegation, led by Martin McGuinness, consisted of Bairbre de Bruin, Rita O'Hare, Pat Doherty and Aidan McAteer. Officials consisted of Dermot Gallagher, Second Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, Tim Dalton, Secretary-General, Department of Justice and the undersigned.

? and
P. Teahan

Garvaghey Road

Martin McGuinness said the possibility of a march this year went out the window, after the three children were burnt alive. The siege on the community needed to be lifted. Anyone suggesting a march would get a very hostile reception from the residents. D. Gallagher said there was a need to let feelings settle down, but the importance and value of a comprehensive agreement was stressed.

Major Concerns

McGuinness outlined a number of major concerns:

- The Settlement Bill;
- The state of the Bloody Sunday enquiry;
- Repeated statements that the RUC will remain;

- Prison releases held up till September.

Demands on SF to say that the war is over or to start decommissioning would only exacerbate problems for SF in managing the process. The only possible answer was a no-no, going nowhere except into a brick wall, especially against a background of all sorts of other negatives. Many of these problems should be discussed through direct dialogue and discussion. Essentially, they were a propaganda exercise to deflect attention from the difficulties of the Orange Order. The formation of an Executive was a nonsense, if G. Adams and D. Trimble could not talk. The meeting of Mallon and Trimble and the Loyalists was hardly an inclusive approach.

David Trimble and Seamus Mallon working together was all right for a while to solve crises. But if the shadow Executive was not formed by September, it would be very damaging. He feared there was a further putting back of dates. There would be a crisis, if this were allowed to continue.

Dermot Gallagher said the Americans were exercised about that. Mallon was very unhappy at the present situation. He had made it clear on a few occasions he was not Trimble's Deputy.

McGuinness complained Mallon had made little or no effort to include SF. There was a danger in the minimalist approach. Demilitarisation was needed. 6 weeks prior to the bomb in Newtownhamilton not a single thing had happened. It was the ideal time for some movement. He was really angry that they had missed the boat. The people who support SF will have the most influence with dissidents. They regarded the students from Kerry involved in

trying to bomb London at the height of the Drumcree stand-off as a crowd of stupid idiots, taking the Orange Order off the hook. The securocrats were providing comfort for those who wanted to undermine SF efforts.

Tim Dalton agreed risks had to be taken.

McGuinness raised the damaging articles by Jim Cusack and Ed Moloney, with stories about decommissioning, handing over of bodies etc. They were answerable to their editors.

Dermot Gallagher said some sweetener was needed and that language would be needed following an Adams-Trimble meeting. We also made the point that some confidence-building was needed vis-à-vis Unionists.

McGuinness raised the suggestion that Blair might bring the parties together. But Trimble needed to be disabused if he thought he could extract statements in exchange for a meeting. All one would end up with is another IRA statement saying that decommissioning will not happen. The war was not over, given the amount of British soldiers and the activities of dissident groups. We were by no means out of the woods.

Bairbre de Bruyn said Nationalists should not be expected to have to repay over the next 10 years the fact that Unionists had signed up for the agreement. She provided a paper of detailed comments on the Settlement Bill.

It was agreed that the Bill had to conform with the Agreement, and that the Irish Government had some leverage in terms of implementing the British-Irish Agreement.

Tim Dalton discussed the prospects of early movement of prisoners, with the Prisons Commission appointed, and reaching conclusions to be put to Government by Monday. Legislation would be needed later to fully cover the 40 year men and those who had been repatriated in terms of conditions.

It was agreed that there would be another meeting on 31 August.

22 July 1998