



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/100/15

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

Lunch with Secretary of State
Belfast, 7 August 1998

25A
20

1. As arranged by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I travelled to Belfast on Friday last to have lunch with the Secretary of State. The context of the meeting was the strong feeling of both Ministers that, despite their different holiday schedules, every effort had to be made now to prepare the ground for substantial progress to be achieved in September on the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

Need for movement by both Adams and Trimble

2. The Secretary of State agreed with our view that the two Governments needed to choreograph movement towards each other by the UUP and Sinn Féin, including through a Trimble-Adams meeting. This ideally should happen before the Clinton visit, given Unionist sensitivity to any perception that Washington might be throwing its weight about. She added however that, given the usual slippage on these things, it was quite likely that movement would not occur before, at the earliest, the President's visit.
3. The Secretary of State said it was time for both Trimble and Adams to again show real leadership. Mallon had been minding and motivating Trimble since they came into office. As regards Adams, the Secretary of State felt she had gone out on a limb for him on a range of issues, on occasion without very enthusiastic support from her Prime Minister. She personally liked both Adams and McGuinness, and felt she was the "best friend" they had around. They had been helpful on many issues, including most recently on the

Ormeau Road and Derry marches. She was now worried however that, if Adams didn't deliver in the near future, Blair might lose his cool with him.

4. In a long conversation with Adams recently, she had spelt it out to him that he needed to move on up to three issues. Two of these should be: (a) words to the effect that the war was over, and (b) appointing an interlocutor to work with the Decommissioning Commission. She was somewhat encouraged by the fact that Adams, rather than adopting his usual practice of taking issue with her, had simply not responded. She feels that if Sinn Féin could make a move along these lines, the way would be open to put pressure on Trimble to agree to an early meeting with Adams. If this happened, it needed to be followed "within two weeks" by the establishment of the Shadow Executive; Trimble, she emphasised, should in such circumstances be given no room for "further procrastination".

5. Overall, the Secretary of State's view was that if we did not move matters forward quickly, the situation had the potential to "unravel with a vengeance". She emphasised also that, if the necessary breakthrough is to be achieved, it will require the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach to speak to Trimble and Adams at a fairly early date.

Prisoner releases / Normalisation (Demilitarisation) Paper

6. In response to the above, I made the point that both Governments would be in a much stronger position to put pressure on Adams if (a) the prisoner release programme in the North were to get off the ground in a significant way at an early date, and (b) if the British could ensure that their forthcoming paper on security normalisation (demilitarisation) was positive and forward-looking.

This, together with a signal that a meeting with Trimble and the early

establishment of the Shadow Executive would be available as a trade-off, might enable Adams to make the necessary moves.

7. The Secretary of State said she wanted prisoner releases to begin in the last week in August, and she had already told the Joint Chairmen of the Release Commission to include a substantial number in the first batch. In saying this, she emphasised that the prisoner issue had been very difficult for her, with her office receiving a huge number of calls, including many late at night, on the issue.

8. The Secretary of State asked if any more prisoners were likely to be released in the near future in the South. I said that I doubted if anything further would happen before late September; we would, in any event, keep in close contact with her people on this. She said - and hoped we would understand this - that politically she had to release Fisher and Wright before she opened the gates to the paramilitaries.

9. As regards the normalisation paper, she said she had rejected the first draft produced by the civil service. She knew we had also found it to be unacceptable. Her people were now working on a new text, and she suggested that, given that we were also working on a possible draft, we might exchange papers. The 22nd August (the day the Secretary of State returns from leave) might be a suitable date for this. Officials could then work on a compromise draft. As I found this to be a very encouraging development, I readily agreed to her suggestion of an exchange of papers.

Civil Service in North

10. We discussed the attitude of the Northern civil service to the overall implementation of the Agreement. The Secretary of State said she had pushed them as hard as she could on most issues; at times, it was frustrating but she was determined to ensure that policy was implemented in a coherent way. The Springvale Campus project was a good example of their delaying tactics. However, she was now simply going to announce that the project was going ahead, and the service would then have to accept this (political) reality. She wanted this done so that President Clinton could turn the sod on the site during his visit. She added that the civil service would also have to learn that they could not arrogantly treat Northern politicians as if they were small boys.

LVF

11. The Secretary of State said that the LVF were likely to announce a permanent ceasefire very shortly (they have since done so). She believed there was also a real possibility that they would begin actual decommissioning before too long.

Relations between Governments

12. The Secretary of State welcomed the fact that relations between the two Governments had never been closer. She spoke very warmly of her discussions over recent times with the Minister, adding that their new meetings format (Ministers plus one or two officials) was working extremely successfully. She also paid tribute to the sterling work of the Gardai in dealing with Republican dissidents.

Comment

13. Once people are back off holidays, we need to begin serious work on moving the UUP and Sinn Féin towards each other, in particular through a Trimble-Adams meeting. A possible trade-off might have Trimble agreeing to a meeting with Adams, leading to the early establishment of the Shadow Executive, in return for Sinn Féin moving on (i) a "war is over, as far as we're concerned" type statement and (ii) perhaps two other issues (an interlocutor for the Decommissioning Commission, and statements on either the disappeared or the definitive ending of punishment beatings). All this would be against a background - of considerable help to Sinn Féin - where (a) prisoner releases would have begun in a significant way in the North, and (b) the British would have published a positive and forward-looking paper on normalisation of security measures.


Dermot Gallagher
Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division

10 August 1998