



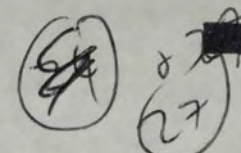
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Meeting between officials and Sinn Fein.
Dundalk. 4th October 1995

Mr Teahon
 Mr Dalton
 Mr O'Uiginn

Present were:

Official side: Mr. P. Teahon, Mr. T. Dalton, Mr. S. O'Uiginn.

Sinn Fein: Mr. Martin McGuinness, Mr. Pat Doherty, Mr. Aidan McAteer, Ms. Siobhán O'Maoláin, Ms. Rita O'Hare.

1. McGuinness apologised for Mr. Adams, who was tied up with Nancy Soderberg.
2. Teahon suggested as an agenda (a) the Hume/Ancram "non-paper" and, (b) how to get unionists to the table.
3. McGuinness raised in critical terms the comments of the Taoiseach after his meeting with David Trimble, which seemed to imply that a date for all-party talks was not on his horizon. The Sinn Fein view was there would be no dynamic without a date. The Unionist timetable for talks was too far away for Sinn Fein. If the British came to the table, the unionists would follow eventually.
4. McGuinness gave an account of the Sinn Fein Conference at the weekend. Seven hundred people attended, of whom seventy spoke. Everyone was critical of the British Government. He disagreed with the press assessment that Sinn Fein had room for manoeuvre. There was life in the process only because the Sinn Fein leadership was putting life into it. People had lost faith. The seeds of discontent sowed by the British had sprouted and could grow rapidly. People felt the British did not want to talk and were encouraging unionists in the same position. He acknowledged there was a danger his remarks could be seen as tactical, but he

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stressed the position of the leadership could become "very precarious very soon".

5. Teahon stressed the Taoiseach appreciated what Sinn Fein had done in terms of the ceasefire. He was also very clear on the objective of all-party talks. There was now an assertive unionist leadership. The Taoiseach had assured them Sinn Fein did not have room for manoeuvre, but they had stuck by their hard line. He sensed the British Government were now more aware of the difficulties for Sinn Fein and were grappling with setting a date for talks and launching the Mitchell body. However a fundamental question remained as to what could be done if the unionists said "No". The Taoiseach had said he would regard empty chairs as "the ultimate political reversal".
6. McGuinness said it would be worse to have no negotiations and no-one in any chair. Even if the British Government could not persuade the unionists, their own involvement would show a more hands-on approach. Remarkably since the ceasefire there was no statement from any British Minister exhorting Unionists to negotiate with nationalist Ireland. Mayhew's first statement on his return from Australia was to push decommissioning. Why were the British seeking to promote a split in Sinn Fein?
7. Teahon thought it would be good for everyone if some variant of the Trimble proposal could work. He had a sense from the Taoiseach's discussion with Gerry Adams that the election aspect was the problem for Sinn Fein. McGuinness doubted if the SDLP would touch the proposal and proclaimed that Sinn Fein would certainly "not touch it with a bargepole".
8. The discussion then shifted to the Hume-Ancram paper. McGuinness queried the status and origin of the document: Was it a British Government/Dublin/US paper ?

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9. The Official side confirmed it was not an Irish paper, and said their assumption was it was a "deniable" British draft given to Hume to test the waters and to draw people into dialogue. Teshon said that from his conversations with Lyne he felt "Washington 3" was not a principle. If unionists came to the table, "Washington 3" would go. He asked whether Trimble's proposal could be worked into a variation of the Convention idea.
10. McGuinness queried sceptically whether the British thought Trimble's idea was good. He asked whether the British Government had confirmed they were prepared to take "Washington 3" off the screen. Ancram had told him the international body would deal with "Washington 1 and 2".
11. Doherty enquired about the present status of the Dalton-Chilcot report. Dalton summarised developments in that respect. The origin of this work pre-dated the present Government. He stressing a number of reassuring aspects in the draft, e.g. flexibility, possible legal protections, an acknowledgement that voluntary decommissioning required cooperation, a carefully phased approach, etc. There was no clear sense in the draft report that Washington 3 would go, but the dynamics of a good report on Washington 1 and 2 could be powerful in burying it. He stressed the Commission's terms of reference had not been agreed between the two Governments.
12. McGuinness again asked whether the British Government had parked Washington 3.
13. O'Luighinn said the British Government had not told anyone they would park Washington 3 and it would be dangerous for Major to do so politically. The differences, compared to the time of the deferred Summit, were that the British had

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hopefully moved away from a policy of isolating Sinn Fein through the Commission, secondly the Commission was now seen as primarily political and thirdly, the US Government had now a much more sustained focus on the details of the issue. However the US were clear they would not be guarantors on "Washington 3", even to the extent of giving their "best guess" of the outcome.

14. McAteer stressed the central importance of moving decisively into all-party talks. The proposal for a new Assembly was seen by Republicans as a sham, aimed at putting off still further the moment of talks. There should be no unionist veto. A pro-active British approach would persuade the Unionists. Instead the British were putting the unionists further on the hook. O hUiginn said that while all-party talks were clearly the goal, there was also an important secondary goal for the Commission, namely to transform the arms agenda from one where Sinn Fein were on the defensive to one where there was a positive approach.

15. Teahon suggested the meeting might address three issues:

- (i) Discussion of the "non-paper" so as to arrive at a document which the Irish Government could bring to the British.
- (ii) How all-party talks could be realised.
- (iii) The DUP and UUP part of the equation: Was there some variation of the Trimble proposal, involving an election, which could be used.

16. McGuinness and McAteer were dismissive on the last point. Sinn Fein had a mandate. The purpose of an election was simply delay. Unionists should not be allowed the power to prevent negotiations. Teahon stressed that a variation of

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the Trimble proposal could be used, as the Taoiseach had suggested, "to call the unionists' bluff".

17. Turning to the paper there was an inconclusive discussion of the 15th December as a target date for all-party talks, and the likelihood of the unionists actually coming to the table. McGuinness contested the view that nothing would be gained if the British came to the table without the unionists. Nothing would be achieved in the peace process without the enthusiastic and meaningful commitment of the British Government.
18. On the question of an international body, McGuinness said the Sinn Fein position had been clear: It should be political as opposed to military. The form of words and its terms of reference and timescale were all important factors which had to be decided.
19. Teahon raised the point whether, in the event of an international body, Sinn Fein would be speaking on behalf of the IRA or giving an informed view in that respect. McGuinness countered strongly that Sinn Fein were a political party with a political mandate. They would be involved only on that basis. Moreover the objective was to take all the guns out of Irish politics, not to focus on one side only.
20. The official side stressed, in the most emphatic terms, that it would be essential that the proposed body should be able to form a judgement of the position of the paramilitaries, based on authoritative information. There could be no objection to Sinn Fein observing the proprieties of their mandate, and putting forward their views on demilitarisation. However, if the body's report was to serve any useful purpose, it had to reflect authentic views of the paramilitaries, and those views had to be

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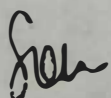
constructive in their public impact. Anything else would alienate the Americans, and play into the British strategy of isolating Sinn Fein and relaunching "Washington 3". In such circumstances, it would be far better to have no "body" at all.

21. There was some discussion about the terms of the "non-paper". The Sinn Fein side suggested the best approach would be to have an Irish paper which they could consider. The official side made some general comments on how the "non-paper" could be improved, either in terms of the Irish Government's objectives, or what we knew of Sinn Fein positions. It was stressed however that these were purely personal or technical suggestions which had not even been discussed among officials, still less representing Government policy.
22. The Sinn Fein side showed a marked reluctance to engage in textual discussion of the paper on their side, and the key paragraph (the terms of reference of the proposed body) were not discussed at all. It was left open that the Irish Government might work on a redraft of the paper which could be discussed with Sinn Fein.
23. The last half an hour of the meeting was taken up with a general, and sometimes heated, discussion of the role of the British Government, the unionists, and the way forward generally. McGuinness stressed that their supporters were now making an act of faith in the leadership, rather than in the process itself and that it was only a matter of time until that affected the leadership also. The British Government were trying to force Sinn Fein into positions of guilt and surrender. That would not work. He stressed again the value of a symbolic British engagement, even in the unionists absence. (Comment: Interestingly, he spoke positively of the impact which a "trilateral" of SDLP, Sinn

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Fein, Alliance, etc., with the two Governments would have). Teahon responded strongly with the views of the Taoiseach and Government.

24. At the end of the meeting, McGuinness indicated his interest in a further meeting with the Tanaiste. Mr. Adams would be in Dublin on Saturday and might also seek to make contact at some level. It was agreed that McAteer would telephone with precise suggestions which could be considered. (Sinn Fein do not envisage a further meeting with Ancram until after the Tory Party Conference).
25. Comment: The meeting confirmed that Sinn Fein envisages buying into the twin-track approach under certain conditions. It remains to be seen how realistic these are, since they did not engage decisively on the "non-paper" or the proposed terms of reference. This may be because of Adams' absence, or because they were otherwise "under-instructed". It was unclear whether the further meetings they suggested with the Irish Government will throw further light on their position in the interval. In spite of repeated efforts to convince them of its potential, they remained unremittently dismissive of the Trimble proposal. The yardstick of genuine British commitment to, and involvement in the process of talks seems a crucial factor in their calculations.



Sean O'Grainn
5 October, 1995