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Meeting with Gerry Adams

1. I met briefly with Mr. Gerry Adams at his request on 30 October.
2. He spoke with some irritation of his meeting with Hume last night. He was somewhat dismissive of the good atmospherics of the Hume/Major meetings, concentrating instead on the fact that the two crucial issues in his view - the text and the "gap" issue - had not been mentioned. He was now expected to secure a "P O'Neill" draft without any sense that the British were really engaged, and where in fact he thought "the signals were bad". He said that if the IRA sensed a "SoS" (ceasefire) was in the pipeline they were likely to hold off on operations they might otherwise be contemplating. Bad signals had the opposite effect. He stressed the need to have a British position on the text tomorrow, or Monday at the latest.
3. I stressed again in the strongest terms that any further "operation" would remove the last vestige of room for manoeuvre. That should be made crystal clear to everyone in the Republican movement. I felt the Hume meeting was encouraging in that Major was again engaged, but we had to be realistic about the pressures on him. We were trying very hard to find scenarios which both they and the British could work.
4. I then sketched out and "sold" very strongly the approach we had under discussion internally, viz. a plenary to pledge the Mitchell Principles, a period of bilaterals (almost certainly with unionists holding aloof) to establish a timetable etc. for the talks, and the Chairmen to report to the Governments at the end of that period. (I did this in general terms without invoking any text.) I explained that we all had to accept realistically that no-one had the power to keep the unionists at the table if they wanted to leave. Adams agreed strongly on the need to keep the unionists there. Although he did not commit himself, I had the impression that he was quite prepared to explore this road. He certainly did not dismiss it.
5. I urged then the need to help those who wanted to ensure that any renewed ceasefire

had the optimum effect and headed off, as far as possible, the inevitable doubts and scepticism which would inevitably be stronger now, given the breakdown of the first one. I suggested the Taoiseach's point about expressions of regret. He said he would scrutinise earlier "P. O'Neill" statements to see whether anything serviceable could be found.

6. I said that the "no first strike" concept could be very valuable both in terms of giving the loyalists an "out" to accept the ceasefire and to suggest to others (even if only on a presentational level) that this ceasefire was in better terms than the last. Could such a statement be given, for example, as a formal clarification to the Americans, following on the heels of a first ceasefire statement?
7. Adams responded with long reflections about Republican sensitivities regarding the loyalists, whose ceasefire was always openly conditional, had been broken repeatedly, etc. He agreed (I think) that "no first strike" was implicit in any complete ceasefire and even said at one point that Republicans always observed it vis-a-vis loyalists. (When I mentioned Smallwoods he dismissed that case as an activist.) He was very unforthcoming on the idea, but I asked him to think it over carefully.
8. I asked him also to examine whether there were other possibilities (which he might discern from his own knowledge) of building confidence in a new ceasefire and to ensure its greatest possible political impact. He agreed a statement should be as far as possible a "lubricant" for the political process and said he would see whether anything could be brought forward.

Sean Ó hUiginn
30 October 1996