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Reference Code: 2021/98/3

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Amb. Gallagher
Sean Donlon

Taoiseach's meeting with Bruce Morrison Group
Government Buildings,
Tuesday, 24 September 1996, 6.30 pm

The US delegation comprised Bruce Morrison, Niall O'Dowd, Chuck Feeney and Joe Jamison. The Taoiseach was accompanied by Secretary Teahon and Gerry Cribbin.

The key exchanges during the one-hour long meeting were as follows:

- **Morrison** gave an account of the intensive level of meetings which he had had with Northern Ireland political representatives. He described the meeting with Gerry Adams as 'very long and thorough' and that with David Trimble as 'one of the best and most open' that they ever had. The delegation's meetings with the British Government, the UUP, the SDLP and Sinn Féin left **Morrison** with three clear impressions:-

First, Northern Ireland's Nationalist leaders 'are very much committed to initiatives aimed at getting over the hump of the ceasefire';

Second, there are many people within the Multi-Party Talks process who are 'trying to make the talks work, including David Trimble'. From their meeting with him, the delegation got 'some sense of the need for momentum in the process'.

Third, there is a 'very substantial risk of this whole process blowing up in our faces'. The ability to hold the process together is very difficult. The IRA's willingness and ability to pursue large-scale bombing activity, as evident from the London bomb-making haul, makes very difficult the task of those in the Republican movement who are pursuing the peace strategy option.

- The **Taoiseach**, in response to a query from Morrison, said that he did not express 'optimism' about the prospects for an IRA ceasefire during his US visit. The strongest word he used was 'hope'. And there is reason for hope because the logic of a ceasefire is inescapable. However, there had been so much pessimism after Drumcree that the slightest chink of light shed by him

on the prospects for an IRA ceasefire had been magnified out of all proportion.

- The **Taoiseach** assured the delegation that the Government are very aware of the great difficulties involved in efforts to persuade the IRA towards a credible ceasefire restoration. These difficulties are compounded by the events surrounding Drumcree which make more difficult the task of those advocating the democratic option over the physical force one. Furthermore, British Government and Unionist suspicions about the credibility of a renewed ceasefire would largely be driven by the fact of the February breakdown. The situation is more difficult now from the perspectives of both Republicans and Unionists. The Government continues to seek a reinstatement of the ceasefire but, in addition, want the Republican movement, while deliberating on the matter, not to engage in further IRA operations. The process of internal debate needs space to develop and planning operations (like bombs in London) makes it very difficult for the Republican movement as a whole to fully work through the process. The delegation, therefore, on their return to the US should call publicly for a reinstatement of the IRA ceasefire and should encourage anyone with an influence on the IRA 'to give Sinn Féin the space to work things through'.
- **O'Dowd** asked for the Taoiseach's assessment of whether the British Government are optimistic or pessimistic about an IRA ceasefire restoration. The **Taoiseach** replied that the British Prime Minister seems concerned 'to respond in a positive and helpful way to anything put forward in that regard by John Hume'. The Prime Minister however would not appear to have any great confidence in a successful outcome. While he is in no way willing to negotiate with Sinn Féin while the IRA campaign continues, he is anxious to help and facilitate moves by others within the confines of democratic principles and political constraints.
- The **Taoiseach** then expressed concern at comments by Martin McGuinness on the need for a new peace process. Is it wordplay? Or a new convenience slogan? He hoped so because the only option on the table is the multi-party talks which had proved extraordinarily difficult to get under way in the first place. Sinn Féin had seized on the elections as 'anti-process' which turned out to be a bonus for them and perhaps, the party is now attributing the same slogan to the talks while they work their way through to a restoration of the IRA ceasefire.

- **O'Dowd** described the core of Sinn Féin psychology as 'a need for reaction from the British Government'. The party is now waiting for the British side to make the next move. That approach however is forcing the peace strategists into a race against time - indeed a race against the hard-line IRA elements. The evidence from the London bomb haul points to the real hard core pursuing its own agenda irrespective of the political fallout.
- **Teahon** pointed to the need for Sinn Féin to be given political space by the IRA. It was a deeply flawed analysis by the IRA to think that bombs are going to encourage the British Government to change. The two Governments are wedded to the multi-party talks and there is no way that bombs will make any difference to that or to the detail of the approaches adopted on either side. The **Taoiseach** added that if the talks were to break down, Sinn Féin would not be able to recreate that opportunity in the event of a new ceasefire. It took a long time to get the talks up and running. Sinn Féin had asked that decommissioning would not be a precondition - we're almost there in getting that dropped by the Unionists as well as the British Government. If a ceasefire could not be called in those circumstances, then when? If by 'serious negotiations' Sinn Féin mean delivery by the British Government of the Unionists towards an all-Ireland agreement, that ignores the reality of the vetoes existing on both the Nationalist and Unionist sides.
- **Morrison** said that the problem with the peace process is that it 'suffers from runaway symbols such as decommissioning'. The preconditions set by Sinn Féin for attempting to persuade the IRA to reinstate the ceasefire are 'symbolically important to Republicans'. Before going down that road again, Republicans are demanding that this time the British Government must give respect to a new ceasefire decision. While this is all a 'very other world view', some in the IRA nevertheless seem to feel that the British Government are putting them through 'a big game'. Regarding McGuinness' comments on the need for a new peace process, **Morrison** said that the reaction he got from Senator Mitchell's staff was one of 'how dare he say that about the process that the Senator is chairing'. **Morrison** added that he hopes McGuinness' comments amount to 'tactics talk until Sinn Féin can join the negotiations'.
- **O'Dowd** said that in their meeting with Sinn Féin, Adams made clear the following two points: First, 'the next ceasefire, if it happens, will be the last one'. He would lose all credibility within the Republican community if, at some future point in time, he was obliged to seek a third ceasefire. Second, Adams made 'absolutely clear' that the Sinn Féin leadership is not waiting

around for a new British Government to take office - 'they are trying to the death to get a ceasefire now'.

- **Teahon** warned that if there is another IRA bomb, Sinn Féin could be 'off the screen for months' and the IRA psychology of 'going out from a position of strength' is not giving the British Government any of the necessary space. If there is a new ceasefire, the Republican movement must understand the need to give the British and the Unionists some space to come around to accepting the bona fides of such a move. Sinn Féin would also need to be conscious of Trimble's very difficult position in the talks vis-à-vis Paisley and McCartney.

- The **Taoiseach** said that he does not believe that the British Government will make a statement on the precise terms set by Gerry Adams with a view to securing an IRA ceasefire restoration. However, it is his conviction that this British Government 'are prepared to deliver a good deal more than they are prepared to say'. The biggest problem with Republican thinking and strategy is their 'inability to understand the need of others for space to move'.

Morrison added that the Republicans' need for British reassurances on their good intent is in many respects a denial of their own history. However, that being the case, the British Prime Minister should be saying privately to Gerry Adams that his Government will take a renewed ceasefire more seriously next time and will do everything possible to deliver an agreed settlement. That 'man-to-man element with Sinn Féin is missing'. The **Taoiseach** said that contact of that kind will not happen this side of a ceasefire but the British Prime Minister remains deeply interested in, and committed to, an agreement on Northern Ireland. Republicans should seize the opportunity inherent in that interest and commitment.

- In response to a query from the Taoiseach, **Morrison** said that all the indications point to 85% support within the Republican movement for Adams regarding a ceasefire restoration. The remaining 15% 'hold the ultimate veto and balance of power' and they disagree not only with the approach of the two Governments but also with that of Adams and McGuinness. A sense must exist at Sinn Féin leadership level that, at some point, Adams will have to say that if a ceasefire is not called within a certain timeframe, the opportunities existing at present will all be gone. In that regard, special cognisance should be taken of the possibility that Senator Mitchell may not be centrally involved in the process for too much longer - a major post in Washington is likely on the cards in the event of President Clinton's re-election. **O'Dowd** said that although it is very hard to read IRA intentions, the parameters being set by the Hume/Adams dialogue will be sufficient for a ceasefire restoration.

Therefore, 'the sooner the British Prime Minister makes the statement, the better'.

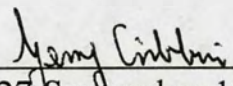
- **Feeney** expressed the view that the IRA do not believe that progress is being made in the multi-party talks, despite what Mitchell and the two Governments are saying. He agreed with the Taoiseach's view that everything Sinn Féin had been seeking in relation to the Talks has either been delivered or is in the process of being delivered. The **Taoiseach** added that the Republican movement need to be brought back to 'the facts of their own requests over the past 3 years' in terms of all-party talks. The judgement should be on the deeds of the British Government and with the exception of prisoner issues, Sinn Féin's requests have either been delivered or are almost at that point. The British handling of prisoner issues had been their 'most short-sighted and least imaginative response to the August 1994 ceasefire'. But even in that area, Republicans should have been able to make an honest assessment of Major's limited room for manoeuvre. The Home Secretary is not under the Prime Minister's control as has been the case in previous British Governments. On most of Sinn Féin's demands, however, the response has been positive even if somewhat slow and therefore, logic dictates that a ceasefire should be called soon. **Feeney** suggested that the hard-line 15% are immune to such arguments. The **Taoiseach** responded that the Republican movement may yet need to operate on the basis of majoritarianism rather than unanimity if the 15% are to be denied an ultimate veto.

- **Morrison** said that from his discussions with Sinn Féin, he believes that the party is prepared to move forward. As to 'the what and when of the endgame', that was not made clear. The delegation's task at the meeting was to convey the fact that, in reality, there is a timeframe in operation. The **Taoiseach** said that whatever the British Government says may not be enough for Republicans. They make seek to engage the British in a protracted clarification process. He himself had set out the Government's approach to the Talks in some considerable detail in his 30 April Speech in Finglas. While Sinn Féin welcomed it, they do not seem to have made any serious attempt to built support within their constituency for such an approach.

- **O'Dowd** said that 'whatever Gerry Adams and John Hume discussed in February was put up to the IRA'. *What the IRA are looking for is 'a dignified exit from its campaign and only the British Prime Minister can give them that'*. However, they seem to be foolishly thinking of accompanying such an exit with a 'spectacular'. **Teahon** pointed to the folly of that psychology, having particular regard to its adverse effects on Major's

room for political manoeuvre within his own Cabinet. The **Taoiseach** said that Major's disposition is to be helpful to John Hume but it is likely that the Republican movement will make a very good case on why any particular statement by the British Government is not sufficient. **Morrison** suggested that if the Irish Government, the Opposition parties in the Dáil, the SDLP and the US Administration endorsed such a statement and Sinn Féin maintained that it was insufficient, then that party would in effect be walking away from the peace process. **O'Dowd** drew a parallel, in terms of an IRA ceasefire, between the granting of the Adams visa in 1994 and a British Government policy statement covering the key issues of concern to Republicans.

- The **Taoiseach** asked if the delegation got any sense from their meeting with Sinn Féin that the leadership understands the need for a Statement of the kind being sought to be 'scanned' by the British for Unionist concerns. **Morrison** responded that Adams is dealing with a 'very disgruntled constituency' where the level of mistrust has been deepened considerably by the events of the summer. That is the political environment within which he has to operate and Adams' greatest virtue in the present situation is that 'he has still got hope and determination'. **O'Dowd** said that the events surrounding Drumcree have 'empowered Adams like never before'. Throughout the summer months, Nationalist opinion stood full square behind Adams' statements on the situation. He therefore is in 'a stronger position now' to make that quantum leap than in August 1994. The **Taoiseach** agreed.
- The meeting concluded at that point with **Morrison** undertaking to state publicly the need for an IRA ceasefire restoration, the necessity for a full 're-focus' to the political process in pursuit of aims and the logic that the present opportunity should not be passed by.


27 September 1996

(14)

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19 September 1996

VISIT OF MORRISON GROUP

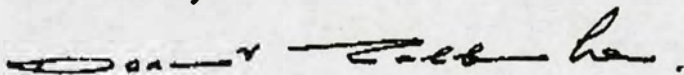
Dear Secretary

1. As you will be aware from Pat Hennessy's reports, Bruce Morrison, Niall O'Dowd, Chuck Feeney and Joe Jamison will travel to Ireland this week for a series of meetings in Belfast and Dublin. On Saturday, they will meet Sinn Féin and subsequently John Alderdice in Belfast. They then travel to Derry, where they hope to meet John Hume on Sunday.
2. On Monday, the group have lunch with David Trimble, Ken Maginnis and Jeffrey Donaldson. This will be followed by meetings with the loyalist para-militaries. On Monday evening, they will be in Dublin for meetings.
3. I had a general discussion yesterday with Niall O'Dowd about the visit. He said that the group was determined to convey to Sinn Féin that the current situation was untenable. Those who would wish to help Adams in the U.S. "can't continue to live off their nerves, wondering if tomorrow will bring another bomb". In this regard, he made the point strongly that Sinn Féin simply did not seem to comprehend how sensitive an issue terrorism had become in domestic politics here, post the World Trade bombing, Oklahoma City, etc.
4. O'Dowd also said he had a sense that Sinn Féin now needed access quite badly to the U.S. for fundraising purposes. At the moment, there was no way that business people here were prepared to support them. In addition, Chuck Feeney, who funds their

office in Washington, had made it clear to Adams that, if there was one more incident, he was withdrawing all financial backing.

5. Asked about prospects for a ceasefire, O'Dowd said he did not feel it was imminent. His sense was that there was a continuing and quite intensive debate within the Republican movement but that Adams was not yet able to resolve the situation in a positive way. The reality was that, after a series of disasters including the murder of Garda McCabe in Limerick, Sinn Féin had been rescued by Drumcree in quite a fundamental way. But they still failed to see that this made the present an ideal time for the Republican movement to move creatively. He repeated that he did not believe an all-out ceasefire was on - matters seemed to be in a "holding pattern" - but he was hopeful some "interim movement" in this direction might be possible. From Sinn Féin's point of view also, it was also important that they made a move in good time before the Presidential elections on 5th November.
6. On a totally different issue, O'Dowd said that the IDB seemed to be in a difficult position at the moment and, as a result, he would like to move from their sponsorship of the Business 100 to that of the IDA. He is having discussions with the IDA at present on this, and said he would welcome our support both in Washington and Dublin.

Yours sincerely



Dermot Gallagher
Ambassador

Seán Ó hUiginn Uas
Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division