



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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SECRET

Mr. Gillin  
5th 20.2.95.

*Taoiseach*

27

*Do see please - important passages in particulate.*

SEEN BY  
Mr 13/2/95  
TAOISEACH

*cc Core to PST  
PSS*

*Mr F Murray  
Mr P Keenan  
Mr S Dowling  
Mr T Dalton*

Meeting with Gerry Adams

Belfast, 11 February, 1995

1. I had a long meeting with Mr. Gerry Adams in Belfast on Saturday, 11th February. He had suggested a "philosophical" discussion in circumstances where he would be under less time-pressure. I thought it might be useful to do so before his Party Conference. Fr. Alec Reid was also present.

*13/2*

Garda Actions

2. He raised at the outset continuing problems with Garda treatment of Republican activists here. He said the resentment of a few key activists could have a disproportionate effect on the political climate for him. He listed various instances, some of which were raised already by Sinn Fein, e.g. Paddy McGrory's funeral. There were other ways where sensitivity could have been shown, at little cost to the Garda (e.g. apparently a conspicuous member of the "heavy gang" was on duty in Dublin Castle). He linked this in his conversation with the arms find at Oldcastle, (which he said the conspiracy theorists in the Republican movement were already linking to the decommissioning issue), county-wide sweeps being undertaken by the Garda, etc. Republican activists assumed these matters were all decided at Cabinet level, and the overall climate was becoming difficult for him to handle.
3. I recalled that these difficulties had already been raised with the Taoiseach. My understanding was that had been helpful to both sides. Sinn Fein however must distinguish totally between Garda practice, where there might be room for discussion, and illegal actions, where there could be none. I advised him that it would be very counter-

productive for Sinn Fein's dialogue with the Government if there was any confusion between these two things. Mr. Adams acknowledged immediately that it had been a clear understanding with all Governments that no illegal activities would be condoned. He was not seeking or expecting any change in that, but simply drawing attention to difficulties that he was experiencing in keeping Republican minds constructively focussed on the peace process.

#### British positions

4. We had a long "philosophical" discussion on the overall situation. He queried me insistently on our assessment of British attitudes: Were they interested in the peace process or simply in splitting the Republican movement? I gave him a realistic, but on the whole positive, assessment. British attitudes were the key to the situation. They were not easy to deal with, and gave mixed signals about their intentions and priorities. We too had been wary, but overall we were persuaded that they were sincere in wishing to consolidate the peace process and their motivation was benign rather than malign. However they were under very considerable pressures themselves, and, naturally, wished to consolidate peace in ways which did not cause melt-down on the other side or inordinate political difficulties for themselves. We had found that great patience was necessary in dealing with them.
5. Adams asked our views on likely British long-term intentions on Northern Ireland. I said there was no authoritative view on that. Perhaps they did not have one themselves. There was manifestly little positive solidarity between the wider British public and Northern Ireland. Personally, I thought the only time that might come to the fore would be if unionists were being expelled from the United Kingdom.

That might bring an emotional "kith and kin" movement to the surface. However the unionists' problem was that the consent principle had disposed of that emotional argument. It had put the onus of proof on unionists to show that their quest for external legitimacy was matched by serious change by them to acquire internal legitimacy in the eyes of the nationalist community. Overall it was probably fair to assume that the British would go quite happily, provided it was safe for them to do so. That seemed to be what they were actually saying, in the Joint Declaration and elsewhere.

#### Framework Document

6. Adams repeated his worries about the impact of the Framework Document on his supporters. He asked me what we thought the unionist reaction would be. I said we believed it would be hostile, by the political leaders at least. However, as the Tanaiste had always stressed, the document intended to challenge both sides. There would also be matters which would not be to the Republican taste.
7. Adams referred to the interview on the TV Counterpoint programme, in which David Burnside said he had read every word of the document and was glad that it was now being shifted to a more unionist basis. He enquired if this was likely. I said the entire document was ad referendum, and we had as yet no clear signal from the British at political level. However the Irish Government would not accept anything which distorted the balance of the document. We would also be reluctant, as a matter of principle, to be seen to react to deliberate press manipulation by unionists.
8. Adams, echoing, he said, Martin McGuinness, was critical of the extent to which the Framework Document was now the exclusive focus, and a potential blocking factor, on the

road to political dialogue. He hoped the Irish Government would stick to the principle, enunciated by the previous Government, that a bad document would be worse than no document at all. He emphasised very strongly that the credibility of the Irish Government was far more vital for the health of the peace process than the credibility of the British Government, where certain allowances had already been factored in to Republican calculations. In reply to my questions, he said that they would prefer if the document appeared after rather than before the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, but appreciated fully the timing could not be fixed in function of that. I stressed my personal hopes that the document could be concluded and published within the next fortnight or so, since otherwise the Governments' credibility on the issue would begin to diminish.

9. Adams questioned me closely about the aftermath of publication. Would comprehensive negotiations then take place? I said that was another way of asking whether the unionists would come to the table. Our hope was that the document, if well gauged, would offer both carrot and stick. The "carrot" would be prospect of constructive negotiations, including on issues such as an Assembly, which the unionists wanted. The "stick" would be if the document was well received in both islands, the US, etc. The unionist refusal to engage in negotiation would come under increasing criticism. We would also hope that the reaction of the unionist business community etc. would give the unionist leadership courage to go to the table.

#### Internal Structures

10. We had a long discussion on the internal aspects of any settlement. Adams made clear that ruling out an internal settlement was a central tenet of their - and the SDLP's - position. If they were to accept structures inside Northern

Ireland, they could be only as "transitional ones". I reassured him that the Framework Document would very much keep open the question of the future realisation of nationalist aspirations. However we saw the continued existence of Northern Ireland for some time to come as an unquestioned reality. That posed important tactical questions for Sinn Fein, not unlike the questions Hume and his colleagues faced a generation earlier: Did one reject the system "root and branch", leaving the unionists a free hand, or did one work the system to improve it, subject of course to the protection of basic principles and aspirations?

11. I said the Irish Government would not itself be subscribing to the "transitional" approach. We anticipated more a level playing field for persuasion and agreement for both aspirations. However, if Sinn Fein chose to interpret the new arrangements and the ongoing social and political trends in that way, it was a legitimate viewpoint which they could act upon. I said our overall vision was to remould the Northern Ireland framework, given that it was a reality for some time to come, at least. It had undoubtedly begun as a system directed against the nationalist community. It could however be transformed into a framework expressly dedicated to protecting the rights of both communities in a divided society. That function would probably be required even in a transition to a united Ireland. Realistically in such circumstances one could see nationalists offering unionists the reassurance of familiar Northern Ireland structures, not necessarily in a federal or confederal structure, but possibly as a devolved system within Irish, rather than British, jurisdiction.
12. Adams thought that the Republican movement was ultimately realistic. "The democratisation of the Northern statelet" was a value they recognised. That had lain behind the civil

rights movement. The savage reaction to that movement had given new impetus to the armed struggle. There was now profound scepticism about the reformability of Northern Ireland. He did not however rule out categorically some Sinn Fein involvement in internal structures, within an appropriate context. I did not press the point further.

#### Government of Ireland Act

13. We had a brief discussion about constitutional balance. I stressed that the only undertakings by the Irish Government would be those on the face of the Framework Document. How the Constitution was changed to fulfil those undertakings would be a matter for future consideration. He questioned me about the Government of Ireland Act. I explained the disadvantages involved in a amendment, as opposed to total repeal, of the Government of Ireland Act. He said he had also discussed the matter with John Hume, who was also strongly of the view that repeal rather than amendment was the desirable objective. He showed himself inclined to be persuaded to this course.

#### British Dialogue with Sinn Fein

14. We discussed the future development of their dialogue with the British. He said Sinn Fein had been at pains to make clear, during the bugging incident, that dialogue was to continue. He thought the bugging incident might be closed by agreement with the British side on some independent agency to sweep the offices before meetings.
15. He stressed however that the shelf-life of dialogue in the present format was mostly over. "If people are not slagging Martin and myself for these trips up and down to Stormont, they are very close to it". They proposed at their next

meeting (probably Friday next) to hand over a letter to Mr. Major (not for publication) which would request

- (a) an end to the ban on Ministerial contacts with Sinn Fein, and,
- (b) a meeting with Sir Patrick Mayhew.

They would have one further meeting to receive and consider the response to that request. If it was not positive, they would seek some device to "park" the talks in their present format, e.g. an interval for reflection, or a reduced delegation.

16. I expressed Government support for British Ministerial involvement in the discussions, and at the same time warned of the dangers of Sinn Fein appearing to take a negative position. I said the Tanaiste would be urging change on Sir Patrick Mayhew on Tuesday. Adams said it would be "particularly disastrous" for him if discussions on the Framework Document were to continue the discriminatory treatment against Sinn Fein. He was extremely strong on this point. He stressed also the unfair disadvantage of Sinn Fein not to be able to meet Ministers in the course of their constituency work. Fr. Reid emphasised that if people were being asked to accept the constraints of democracy, they should also be clearly given its benefits.

#### Contacts with Hume

17. Adams spoke of his on-going contacts with John Hume. He praised greatly a statement by Hume on BBC radio earlier that day (which I had not heard). He was hoping to develop a "mission statement" with Hume on common positions in areas such as respect for democratic mandates, prisoners, etc. He

stressed however that this was his idea, which had not yet been agreed by Hume.

#### US Fund-raising

18. He spoke at some length about his concern on the US visas. He had been getting positive signals from various people, e.g. Ambassador Kennedy-Smith, Senators Kennedy and Dodd, Bruce Morrison, etc. However at a meeting between Nancy Soderberg and Mairead Keane recently, Ms. Soderberg had given a highly negative signal. He said his visa was due for renewal on the 3rd March. If, at that point, the fund-raising restrictions had not been lifted, he would make a public issue of it in the US, reluctant as he was to do so. He dismissed as rubbish the allegations about "shopping expeditions" for arms purchase in the US, saying the Americans did not now maintain that. The link to the decommissioning of arms had been made in a very distorted way by the British. It would be extremely discouraging if the Americans now linked themselves so closely to the tactics of British negotiations. They had been sold to Republicans as a benign and independent outside force. He felt the British objective with Sinn Fein, overall, was to exhaust them in petty skirmishes on every front. That in turn was corroding every prospect of trust between Republicans and the British. He hoped the Americans would stay clear of that agenda.

#### Meeting with Taoiseach and Tanaiste

19. He referred again to his request for a meeting between Hume and himself and the Taoiseach and Tanaiste. He understood the scheduling problems which had made it impossible last weekend. However he thought it might be more timely than

every after the Tanaiste's meeting with Sir Patrick Mayhew. I said I understood the Taoiseach and Tanaiste were already seized of that request, and I would check that it had been reactivated.

Sean O hUiginn  
13 February, 1995