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<b>Reference Code:</b>	2021/96/36
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Meeting with Neil O' Dowd  
18th July. 1994

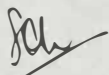
1. I met Mr. Neil O' Dowd on the 18th July. He gave me in strict confidence a brief account of the meeting which he and a number of other Irish-Americans had with Gerry Adams last weekend.
2. The American delegation consisted of Mr. Bill Flynn, Mr. Chuck Feeney, Mr. Joe Jamison, Mr. Bruce Morrison and Mr. Neil O' Dowd.
3. The discussions, which continued practically the whole day, were formally on the basis of a submission made earlier by the Irish-Americans to Sinn Fein, in the context of the public fora to discuss the Downing Street Declaration.
4. Adams focussed on one sentence in that submission: "That the absence of violence from the IRA can achieve far more than armed actions". He said that would be one of the central planks in his presentation to the IRA to cease violence.
5. O' Dowd said that the American visitors, reviewing the situation afterwards, felt that Adams was preparing to go for an end to violence - "a decision to adopt an unarmed strategy" in his language. They had been prepared, partly on prompting from us, to take a firm stand against any notion that a limited ceasefire would be sufficient. Adams had however hardly touched on that possibility.
6. The scenario, as understood by O' Dowd, was that Adams expected to go to the IRA with a proposal which would end the armed struggle, but without calling it a permanent end, by about the middle of August at the latest.

7. I asked O' Dowd how he explained the delay, pointing out there was a shift in climate taking place here and each passing week eroded further the public's willingness to take Sinn Fein seriously. O' Dowd thought that one of the central concerns was to put distance between the IRA response and the Joint Declaration. They wished their response to be seen as a commitment to their peace process. The forthcoming Sinn Fein Conference was not a serious decision-making exercise. It would produce an assessment of the Declaration on the now familiar lines of "some good elements, some bad, etc."
8. I pointed out to O' Dowd that this would be taken by the public here as a tantamount to a rejection and would unleash pent-up scepticism about the whole peace process. O' Dowd said the Sinn Fein people were not sensitive to that dimension. However, the collective judgement of the Americans after the meeting was that Adams was best understood as a cautious politician who, essentially, had been careful in his promises to the Americans but had so far delivered on them. His selling point for the IRA would not be the British position (although Adams said there were contacts), but rather the potential of alliances with Irish-Americans etc. They were disposed to believe he would make good on his commitment on a relatively early switch to "unarmed struggle".
9. I asked O' Dowd whether there had been any discussion of ominous recent developments (Smallwoods, McCrea, etc) which I thought had contributed greatly to shifting the climate of opinion in this jurisdiction about Sinn Fein intentions. He said that Adams had clearly dissociated his people from the attack on McCrea, but, on the other hand, had justified the murder of Smallwoods on the grounds that he was a serious player in loyalist terrorism. (It was, one of the Americans had said afterwards, the first time they had seen the "ugly side" of Adams come to the fore).

10. Adams had spent much of the day in discussion with them on what the US/Irish-American dimension might do in the event of a decision "to adopt an unarmed strategy". The visitors pledged themselves to a response which included
- (a) lobbying for access to the US for Republican leaders who had a role to play in the peace process;
  - (b) lobbying in the US generally to increase support for the nationalist agenda;
  - (c) to support the achievement of the rights of all the Irish people, including parity of esteem and equality of treatment, etc.;
  - (d) to seek to increase international investment in Northern Ireland to expand employment on a non-discriminatory basis.

They agreed these objectives would be supported by a staffed campaign and by an advertising initiative.

11. Overall, they retain a belief that an end to violence is still a distinct possibility. O' Dowd was unclear as to how the absence of "permanence" would be handled. I stressed again the need for Sinn Fein, if they did end violence, to do so in a way which enabled the Governments to recognise and act on that. Anything presented as a test, even an open-ended one, posed by gunmen to politicians to deliver their objectives, under pain of reverting to violence, would provoke a very unfavourable reaction across the political spectrum.

  
Seán Ó hUiginn  
18 July, 1994