



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Meeting between Taoiseach and Gerry Adams

Wednesday 6 September, 1995

The meeting fell into four parts:

- (a) Gerry Adams gave an account of the meeting between Sir Patrick Mayhew and Minister Ancram with Sinn Fein on Monday. The essence was that, in response to questions from Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams stated that Sir Patrick Mayhew said that, in the event that an International Commission on decommissioning recommended an outcome which did not contain the Washington 3 condition, then the British Government would not act on such a report by calling all-party talks in round table format;
  
- (b) the Taoiseach made clear to Gerry Adams that the Irish Government would not be threatened by Sinn Fein, specifically in the way in which they had done so at the meeting in Belfast on the previous Saturday. The Taoiseach made clear that the Irish Government had its own position and would act on that position. That position was informed by inputs from Sinn Fein in numerous useful meetings and exchanges of correspondence. Ultimately, however, it was a matter for the Irish Government to make its decisions and to act on them. Gerry Adams responded by saying it was not part of Sinn Fein's approach to "have the Irish Government act as a spokesperson for Sinn Fein". Gerry Adams claimed that such a perception was in fact worse for Sinn Fein than for the Irish Government;

- (c) Gerry Adams passed the Taoiseach the attached words as representing, in Sinn Fein's view, a way forward. Gerry Adams acknowledged that they had followed from conversations between John Hume and himself. He said, in response to questions from the Taoiseach, that he was not aware ~~that John Hume~~ might have put such words to the British Government in July and that the British Government might already have rejected them. Gerry Adams stated that, unlike on other occasions, he had not specifically "cleared" these words but he was prepared to take the personal responsibility for saying what he had said;
- (d) the Taoiseach concluded the meeting by restating that the Irish Government would act as a sovereign Government, make its decisions and implement them, that communication would be maintained at all times with Sinn Fein, that we were clearly at a point in which movement both by the British Government and by Sinn Fein was necessary to reach a satisfactory and acceptable outcome, and that the Irish Government would take fully into account any communications from Sinn Fein in that connection.

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### Terms of Reference for Officials

1. The Summit was deferred essentially because the British insistence on Washington Three prevented us from persuading SF to co-operate with the International Commission that was intended to get everyone off hooks in a situation where SF believed the British insistence applied even if the Commission recommended otherwise.
2. The parallel approach can still work provided both the British and SF can be persuaded to move.
3. The key enabling condition for us to pressure SF is a clear understanding that a positive report from the Commission, covering the first and second Washington tests, would meet British pre-conditions for Sinn Fein's entry to the substantive phase of talks. (There can be no question of the British being free to re-impose pre-conditions if they don't like the Commission's report, or at the end of the "precursor" phase of talks. It is

understood, however, that both Governments together may have to draw their own conclusions, if the Commission's report, for whatever reason, proves to be an insufficient basis to bring one or other of the required parties to the table. This will be done jointly not unilaterally).

4. The first stage of any attempt to get the parallel process back on the rails is to secure a clear British commitment that the third Washington test can be transcended by the Commission's report. The first meeting of officials should therefore concentrate on this capital point, and on persuading the British that a prolonged stalemate centred around pre-conditions will ultimately unravel the peace process.
5. If the capital point can be established, we will then have to concentrate on developing the necessary scenarios to provide cover for the British and re-assurance for the Unionists. It is understood that these scenarios will be part of the package to be announced or indicated formally but privately simultaneously with any dropping of Washington three.
6. The possibility of a "no first strike" agreement would be examined at the Irish initiative or otherwise.

7. The issue of interim political confidence building measures either before, or as a result of agreement during, the talks would be examined at the Irish initiative or otherwise.
  
  8. The redrafting of the Washington one and two tests would not be excluded, although the Irish side would not make a proposal at this stage.
  
  9. The format of the all party talks could be examined to see if elaborations of that topic can be helpful in reaching a balanced accommodation between Sinn Fein and Unionists concerns. But, again, the Irish side would not make any proposals at this stage.
- Background Note on Terms of Reference

## Background Note by Taoiseach on Terms of Reference

1. I think the terms of reference should be expanded for the reasons set out hereunder.
  
- 2.. Last week's draft communiqué formula allowed both the British and Sinn Féin to fudge the issue of a gesture. It became clear, as events developed, that neither of them was actually prepared to go along with the fudge. It is as important to draw realistic conclusions from Sinn Féin's refusal to accept the fudge, as it is to try to get the British to change their position.
  
3. I do not believe that we can take the approach of solving the British problem first, and leaving the Sinn Féin problem on the long finger. We need to see in outline at the start how both of them can be solved.
  
4. I have thought about the implications of the advice I received yesterday on what Sinn Féin/IRA's reaction would be to the proposal I made for the Commission to devise ways, and/or seek agreement on ways, to segment the talks and the decommissioning process into blocks. It seems to me

that those offering the advice believe that Sinn Féin/IRA in fact at this stage only contemplate decommissioning of any kind when the talks are over. In other words, it is felt that they will in practice insist on the right to negotiate right to the end, with a gun pointed to the head of the other participants in the talks. I draw this conclusion because the concern about my proposal seemed not to be about its detail, but about the principle of segmentation. And segmentation clearly involved at least the possibility of some decommissioning before the talks were over.


5. Martin McGuinness remarks in today's paper also suggest that there will be no IRA decommissioning until the political deal is signed and sealed. That public statement is very provocative to Unionists and makes any fudging of the timing of decommissioning especially difficult.
  
6. Therefore the problem I see with exclusively concentrating on getting the British to drop Washington three is that if we succeed, it will be interpreted by Sinn Féin as meaning that it is accepted by both the Irish and British Governments that no decommissioning at all need take place until all the talks are over.



7. The importance of the gesture at some point in the talks is the message it sends that there is no inherent right to hold arms while in negotiation with other (unarmed) parties. The trouble with just relying on the first and second Washington tests, is that these tests can be met while holding the full arsenal in place throughout the full talks process right to the end. I do not believe the talks will ever work on that basis, and if they start on that basis it will not be possible for either Government to reopen the question of arms at a mid point in the talks, without Sinn Féin saying that the basis of the talks was being changed from that on which they had been started. They would claim bad faith, and with good reason.
  
8. It is important to understand the implications of Sinn Féin's refusal last week to cooperate with the Commission even in the initial stage where on the face of the communiqué no gesture was being asked of them. Their view probably was that once they started cooperating with the Commission at all, they accepted its legitimacy. Therefore, if the Commission recommended a gesture at a later stage, Sinn Féin would be in a political difficulty because they had accepted the Commission's legitimacy. And the reason they could be in a political difficulty would be because they had made up their minds in advance to reject any

recommendation of an instalment of decommissioning at any stage before the end of the talks.

9. For these reasons, I believe that we cannot go to the British asking them to drop Washington three in its present form, unless we have accepted within our own system that the scenarios to provide cover for the British and reassurance for the Unionists referred to in paragraph 5 will be put in place at the same time. My paper of yesterday attempted to do so. It attempted to build in safeguards as the talks progressed. If it is not likely to be acceptable, some alternative must be developed. Therefore I think the terms of reference of our officials must actually include reference to an acceptable version of the scenario which we believe will provide sufficient cover for the British and reassurance for the Unionists. If that scenario is not to be one that will blow Sinn Féin out of the process, we need to know what it is before Washington three is dropped.
  
10. I believe that it might be promising to look at a reformulation of the Washington one and Washington two tests. One could perhaps seek an acceptance within Washington two of the principle of progressive



decommissioning of arms as the talks progress, while dropping  
Washington three altogether.

- 11 I also believe it is essential that we ourselves act on the idea of agreed confidence building measures, in areas like parity of esteem, as the talks progress. In this way the talks could be presented as delivering results to people on the ground, even before they were concluded.