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Mr. Cribbin

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***Meeting between the Taoiseach and
the American Ambassador, Jean Kennedy-Smith
in the Taoiseach's Room, Government Buildings,
Friday morning, 28 June, 1996***

Attendance

Taoiseach, John Bruton, T.D.,
American Ambassador, Jean Kennedy-Smith
Richard B. Norland, American Embassy,
Dr. Albert Jordan, Department of the Taoiseach

The meeting had been taking place a short while before Dr. Jordan arrived.

The **Taoiseach**, speaking about Sinn Féin and the IRA, said there comes a time when a parting of the waves has to come. There might have been a time when the Government could accept ambiguities but that was before the Manchester Bomb. The Taoiseach said that the two questions put by the Government to Sinn Féin were important. He made the point that they spring directly from the Mitchell principles. Particularly the statement (which the Taoiseach thought was "D") requiring all parties to renounce violence. This he said, meant that Sinn Féin would have to renounce the IRA armed struggle. The Taoiseach said that on 20 May, Sinn Féin said that they would be willing to sign up to the Mitchell principles. That means they would have to renounce the armed struggle. The Taoiseach pointed out all other parties have accepted these principles. Now, he said, the time had come for Sinn Féin to make up their minds. They must face the truth. It's all the more necessary that they face the truth in the light of the recent events

and actions of the IRA (Manchester Bomb, Murder of Det. McCabe, Clonaslee bomb factory). The Taoiseach said for the last ceasefire there may have been "understandings" which may not have been understood in the same way by the grass roots republicans. That is why, this time, things need to be clear and assurances need to be given in public. It is important, he said, that all know the basis on which a ceasefire is being given. He made a point that no preconditions are being laid down by the Government. The Taoiseach said that on declaration of a ceasefire Sinn Féin could enter the talks, - perhaps 24 hours later. There they would have to answer those same questions - as Mitchell principles - at the start of their participation in the talks. If they wish to have a ceasefire and then address the Mitchell principles, that would be fine, but the questions have to be answered. The Taoiseach said that he made these points recently in the Dáil, and that he had put a lot of thought into his Dáil remarks. He had also prepared **article for the Irish News** to appear Saturday, 29th to address the Nationalist audience in Northern Ireland, explaining the Government's position. The Taoiseach made a copy of this available to Mr. Norland. *{It was subsequently decided not to publish this article.}*

The Taoiseach said he would appreciate if the Ambassador could emphasise to Sinn Féin that **lines of communication have not been closed**. He has not abandoned his commitment to the peace process. He was willing to work as hard as ever for the peace process. The Taoiseach said that it was vitally important for people to know that the issues raised in the Mitchell principles were being faced by the entire republican movement otherwise there would be a lack of trust.

The **Ambassador** said that she agreed with the Taoiseach and that she was revulsed by the McCabe murder and the Manchester bombing. Her administration were completely in tune with what the Taoiseach was saying, and that there was no question but that there has to be a ceasefire. Everybody was completely supportive of this. The Ambassador said that there may be arguments going on in the Republican Movement. She said that Pat Doherty had told her that there was hesitation about accepting the Mitchell Principles but that they did support them. But progress has to be slow. Sinn Féin told her that they could not condemn the IRA or there would be a split. It was also said that **there would be a small group who will never come on board**. Sinn Féin apparently feel strongly that they have to bring all on board and condemning the bomb would not be helpful to this end.

The **Taoiseach** said he did not ask them to condemn the Manchester bombing, he asked them to condemn the killing of Garda McCabe. He said that they probably have gone as far now as they will go on that, and it was not a matter that the Government was pursuing further. The Taoiseach said that the questions that the Government are putting to Sinn Féin flow directly from the Mitchell principles. They cannot support the armed struggle at the same time as renouncing the use of force. They have to get their own people to understand that. What words they use are a matter for themselves, but they must convince people that they mean what they say. The Taoiseach also made the point that we were not saying to Sinn Féin that we would not talk to them until they had answered the two questions. But the two questions

do stay on the table. If there were to be another atrocity we would have a new situation and that he said was what was worrying about Clonaslee. He said it was not a maverick operation. There was 36 bombs being assembled, that's a lot of bombs - for early use.

The **Ambassador** said it was horrendous and that she agreed with the Taoiseach. She said that the feeling was that Gerry Adams is trying to get there. She said that the American administration saw no alternatives to Adams. She felt that he would deliver if he could.

The **Taoiseach** said that perhaps at a certain level one could understand the Canary Wharf bombing but Manchester was completely inexplicable. The Taoiseach said that before the bombing Sinn Féin could have walked into the talks, signed up to the Mitchell Principles and proceeded and that would have put others in an awkward position. He said the bombing in effect meant that all the work we had done was a waste of time. Everything they had asked had been delivered. The Taoiseach said that he would not meet Sinn Féin till there was a ceasefire. But officials were available for meetings, if there was something worthwhile to discuss or if Sinn Féin had a worthwhile proposition to put.

The **Ambassador** asked that if a ceasefire was declared would the Unionists allow Sinn Féin into talks immediately.

After a short pause the **Taoiseach** said that there was no choice the communiqué says that parties would be admitted to talks. Therefore

there is a commitment to allow Sinn Féin in. **He did say that Unionists might walk out but that the talks would go on.** The Taoiseach said that the central and crucial point was the commitment to the Mitchell principles must be real. He said it was disquieting that Sinn Féin regard the two questions put by the Government as insulting or unhelpful. If they were prepared to accept the Mitchell principles they wouldn't see anything wrong with these questions. He said it was important that Sinn Féin could not be charged that their signing up to the Mitchell principles was an empty formula. The people must know that they mean it. The Taoiseach said that there was something in what Martin McGuinness said that led him to believe that signing up with the Mitchell principles they would be signing up to an empty formula. One of the reasons the two questions were important was that this would help to tie them down. The Taoiseach said it was hard for people to remember six principles but two questions people could remember and it's important that their public understand what is being signed up to.

The **Ambassador** said that regarding Sinn Féin going to the IRA the point had being put to her that Sinn Féin could not go to them because the conditions that they had laid down had not been met.

The **Taoiseach** emphasised that they had been met. The Taoiseach said that Martin McGuinness had conceded this to our officials on Saturday, 8 June. The truth, said the Taoiseach, is that **the conditions have been met.** The Taoiseach went on to say that he did not think the killing in Adare was deliberate, but the Manchester bomb could have been stopped. The Taoiseach said that the two questions put by the

Government were important because they would show that the republicans were not retaining the military option when they entered negotiations. These questions were identical in meaning to the Mitchell principles.

The **Ambassador** asked whether there could be **another meaning to the phrase armed struggle** other than terrorism as it was understood by America. She asked might it have an historical message for the republicans.

The **Taoiseach** in response said it means struggle with arms. He had never heard that it had any other meaning.

The Taoiseach said that it was vital that this time everybody must know what the republicans are doing. We must not have a situation where the republican leadership are saying one thing publicly while saying something different to the units on the ground - telling them, for example, that the arms were being retained and that the armed option remained open to them. The Taoiseach concluded by asking the Ambassador that if her administration heard anything that would be helpful he would appreciate if they would communicate it to him.

The Ambassador assured the Taoiseach that he had her Administration's full support on everything. President Clinton was very focused on this issue, particularly on the context of the bomb in Saudi Arabia.