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SECRET

*Meeting between Secretary Teahon and Ms. Trina Vargo,
Foreign Policy Adviser to Senator Edward Kennedy,
3 July, 1996*

1. Following is a summary report of this meeting, which the undersigned attended.
2. Secretary Teahon addressed in his opening remarks the prospects for a restoration of the IRA ceasefire and progress in the talks in Belfast. On the former, Mr. Teahon mentioned the Taoiseach's 28 June meeting with ANIA representatives, where Mr. O'Dowd had referred to Mr. Adams' claim that 85% of the IRA were in favour of a renewed ceasefire. He indicated that while we had been somewhat disinclined to believe, on foot of this, that an immediate ceasefire was in prospect - as confirmed subsequently by Osnabruck - we did believe that Messrs. Adams and McGuinness were definitely trying to bring about a ceasefire. The trouble seemed to be that a significant segment within the IRA - and we did not know if Mr. O'Dowd's reference to 15% was accurate or not - were opposed. This segment seemed to be predominately based in the South - Mr. O'Dowd had called them the "sunshine soldiers" - in places like North Kerry, Limerick and to an extent in Dublin; and we believed that it was this group which was behind the events in Adare, Clonaslee, Manchester and Osnabruck.

3. Mr. Teahon referred to recent statements by Sinn Féin that it was the attitude of the British Government which was problem. He mentioned in this regard that we had been encouraging the British to get across the message that they were determined that the talks would be meaningful and that decommissioning would not become a road-block. The difficulty of course was that, notwithstanding Sinn Féin's belief to the contrary, there was a limit to the degree to which Unionists would bow to pressure from the British Government.
4. Turning to the talks in Belfast, Mr. Teahon said that the positive aspect was that it was clear that Mr. Trimble and the UUP wanted to do a deal - albeit a deal on their own terms, which were not as yet clear. Mr. Teahon also referred to the malign influence being exercised in the talks by Mr. McCartney, using his best court-room manner.
5. Mr. Vargo asked how Senator Mitchell was holding up. Mr. Teahon mentioned that he understood that Senator Mitchell had shown a certain amount of impatience with the two Government sides at a meeting the previous week, although he had subsequently come back to say that he was sorry for this. Mr. Teahon also referred to indications that progress might be made in the talks taking place on the day of the meeting. He added that the problem was that every time Mr. Trimble came to make a move, he had to guard against charges from the DUP and especially the UKUP that he was selling out on the Union.
6. In response to a question from Ms. Vargo, Mr. Teahon indicated that it was difficult to know what Sinn Féin believed was realistically

attainable. They seemed on one level to be obsessed by the British Government and to believe that if the British guarantee were to be dropped, the Unionists would come on side. Mr. Teahon indicated that if Sinn Féin really did believe this, they were making an unbelievably bad calculation. If Britain pulled out the troops, the more likely outcome would be civil war. We had said this to Sinn Féin and had suggested that the best approach was for the Irish Government, SDLP and Sinn Féin to seek to put in place an agreement - and institutions - based on the Framework Document. If this were achieved, the next phase - which might be helped by demographics - could be an agreed Ireland in some form - which might be a Federal Ireland or a United Ireland. Continuing, Mr. Teahon said that we had believed that Mr. Adams had bought into this approach. However, it seemed that he had not tried to bring the grass-roots around or to the extent that he had, that they had resisted.

7. Mr. Teahon said that the problem with the 85%/15% scenario outlined by Mr. O'Dowd was that the 15% were prepared to use violence; and while the hope presumably was that the leadership would be able to bring them into line (as opposed to having a split), it was not clear that the 15% would play ball. Mr. Teahon added that this group had of course the luxury of not living in Northern Ireland.
8. Ms. Vargo asked if the problem could be resolved by a law and order approach. Mr. Teahon referred in response to the need for public opinion to see Unionists agreeing to a reasonable accommodation with Nationalists on the lines as in the FD, for such an approach to succeed.

Unfortunately, Mr. Trimble had not yet shown that Unionists were at the point of agreeing to such an accommodation.

9. Mr. Teahon said that Mr. Adams had expressed satisfaction with the outline of Government policy as presented orally by officials in the course of their secret discussions with Sinn Féin. We believed that Messrs. Adams and McGuinness had gone to the IRA to seek a ceasefire in the light of this but that they had encountered significant resistance from the grass-roots. Mr. Teahon speculated that this resistance was on two grounds. First, this grouping did not accept the approach of seeking in the first instance equality of treatment, parity of esteem and the FD and of then seeking, in 5/10 years, greater unity - for example in terms of a Federal Ireland. Second, they did not agree that the British Government would resist attempts to turn the talks into a decommissioning conference.

10. Mr. Teahon said that we might have to proceed on the basis of moving gradually forward in the talks towards an agreement on the FD in the hope that the majority of SF/IRA would come on board and that the remainder could be dealt with by a law and order approach. The problem was that the 15% might do something crazy which would compel the British Government to react and the Irish Government to row in with them. Mr. Teahon mentioned in this context that he had spoken earlier in the week to Dr. Mansergh who had described the Osnabruck attack as an act of lunacy, given that the IRA had no way of knowing that the mortar bombs would not result in major carnage. Mr. Teahon added

that Dr. Mansergh had seemed quite pessimistic about the prospects for a restoration of the ceasefire.

11. Ms. Vargo raised the issue of the Government's relationship with Sinn Féin and referred in this context of the two questions addressed to Sinn Féin by the Government. Mr. Teahon said that Sinn Féin had obviously not liked being faced with the questions. However they were perfectly valid questions. He himself had emphasised to Mr. O'Dowd that the first thing Sinn Féin would have to face once and if they entered the talks would be the Mitchell principles. Mr. Teahon commented that the manner in which they had addressed the Mitchell principles on 20 May had given us pause for thought. Mr. Adams' statement on that occasion had been issued in response to a newspaper article and it was clear that Mr. Adams had not prepared the ground in advance. Mr. Teahon added that the way in which the questions had played out had not been entirely satisfactory in that the focus was on personalities (the exchange between the Taoiseach and Mr. Adams). At the same time, they had succeeded in highlighting the need to face up to the Mitchell principles.

12. Mr. Teahon mentioned that Mr. O'Dowd had argued that people were prepared to talk to the Loyalist parties despite activities such as a £1m armed robbery. The reality, however, was that there was a silent conspiracy preventing the Unionists from getting at these parties, pending Sinn Féin's entry into the talks - and of course the Loyalist ceasefire was still intact.

13. Mr. Teahon said that he believed that Sinn Féin did not really want to face up to the Mitchell principles. The language used in Mr. Adams' statement tended to confirm this, as it suggested that the British Government etc. were being hypocritical in signing up to the principles and that Sinn Féin was prepared to do so in the same spirit. Mr. Teahon suggested further that Sinn Féin did not appear to have faced the reality that if they were to join the talks, they would have to deal with the Unionists, even if at arm's length and that there would be pressure to throw them out at the first punishment beating.
14. Mr. Teahon said that there was no question of contact with Sinn Féin being broken off and that Sinn Féin had been told that if they came back with something practical (that would lead to a restoration) we would listen.
15. Mr. Teahon indicated that we did not feel that Sinn Féin seriously believed that they should be allowed into the talks on the basis of their electoral mandate. Ms. Vargo commented that Sinn Féin's protests outside the gates of Stormont Buildings were not even effective PR. They just looked silly, as everybody knew that all Sinn Féin needed to do to gain entry into the talks was to bring about a restoration of the IRA ceasefire.
16. Ms. Vargo mentioned that Mr. Ted Howell (?) and Mr. Mitchell McLoughlin had been very upbeat when they visited the States shortly before the Manchester bomb. She asked if it was possible that they did not know what was about to happen - or whether it was that they were

very good actors. Mr. Teahon referred to Sinn Fein's line that they were not the IRA. Ms. Vargo said that she did not believe people bought this. She mentioned that she had got the sense (in talking to him) that Mr. Adams had been genuinely caught totally by surprise by Canary Wharf. He had previously been very open in warning that the ceasefire was in danger, whenever he thought this was the case. She added that the Manchester bomb had left everyone totally perplexed given everything that had been put in place beforehand, including the involvement of Senator Mitchell - which she described as a bonus.

17. Mr. Teahon said that there was no doubt that Sinn Féin were extremely good actors. He instanced a case in point where a member of Sinn Féin had lied very convincingly to him, although he added that he was not suggesting that Sinn Féin knew precisely everything about the IRA's plans. Mr. Teahon continued that whatever about this, the important point was that Mr. Adams and his colleagues wanted the ceasefire restored in certain circumstances but that there was a group of so-called "hard men" who did not agree. He added that a lot of the recent IRA activity appeared to be semi-tactical although it was very stupid given the risk eg that the petrol tank at Osnabruck could have gone up or, again, that the streets in Manchester might not have been cleared in time before the bomb went off. It was stupid also in that it avoided the reality that the Mitchell principles would have to be faced up to at some point.
18. Mr. Teahon said that Sinn Féin would also have to face the reality that the talks would be a grind. He also repeated that we were encouraging the British to get across the message that they were serious about the

talks on the basis that even if they were sceptical (as they were) about the IRA's intentions, this would at least remove any excuse for violence on their part.

19. Ms. Vargo asked if we had any sense that there would be no progress until there was a new British Government in place. Mr. Teahon said that while some people believed this, we did not. Commenting that he tended not to believe that the next election would be held in October but rather that it would happen in May, 1996, he expressed the view that the very large domestic agenda facing Mr. Blair would prevent him from devoting much attention to Northern Ireland. Mr. Teahon also referred to the considerable effort which Mr. Major had put into achieving progress on Northern Ireland. While it was undoubtedly the case that he could have handled decommissioning better, he had definitely been making progress. It was a myth that progress was not being made before Canary Wharf.

20. Continuing, Mr. Teahon commented that Nationalists had made a big thing about the election idea. At the same time, it had to be recognised that it had provided the Unionists with a fig-leaf (for getting into talks). Mr. Teahon added that the election idea had been aired as far back as the Cannes European Council in June, 1995 and suggested that if an election had been held shortly afterwards, it might have been possible to have begun the talks in 1995. Mr. Teahon also commented that Mr. Major had mishandled his response to the Mitchell Report and that he should have combined an endorsement of the Report with his promotion of the election idea.

21. Ms. Vargo suggested that it was short-sighted of Sinn Féin to assume that President Clinton would succeed in the next Presidential election. They should be doing everything they could to take advantage now of his presence in the White House. Commenting that Sinn Féin's calculations sometimes seemed to be far off the mark, she said that Senator Dodd had pointed out that the President was devoting a disproportionate amount of his time to Northern Ireland and that they shouldn't take for granted that he could continue to do this forever. Ms. Vargo also commented that the political parties in Northern Ireland seemed to take it for granted that they had automatic access to the White House. They seemed to have no idea how unusual this was.
22. Mr. Teahon in support referred to Kevin Toolis' book on the IRA ("Rebel Hearts") which brought home the limited horizons of the IRA activists in Tyrone, for whom Belfast was virtually another world.
23. Ms. Vargo said that (before the breakdown of the ceasefire) she and others had been given to understand that the IRA leadership controlled the weapons. She asked whether it was the case in fact that units in Tyrone or Kerry had their own weapons dumps. Mr. Teahon said that the position seemed to be that the leadership, rather than controlling the weapons themselves, sought to exercise control-through internal discipline - over those with access to them. He added that in the wake of the Adare murder, our security services had expected to find the body of an IRA activist. Mr. Teahon said that it was not clear if recent events meant that there was a tacit support by the IRA leadership for violence.

He added that Sinn Féin were expert at rationalising things. Ms. Vargo agreed - it was always someone else's fault. Mr. Teahon in support continued that the reality was that Sinn Féin had not persuaded people against violence, notwithstanding the fact that it could lead us all into the abyss.

24. Ms. Vargo referred to the Loyalist parties and suggested that they deserved greater credit. She also complimented them on their rational approach and suggested that if it was up to people like them alone, progress could be made. Mr. Teahon agreed, adding that it was very unfair of Sinn Féin to suggest that the Loyalists were a British creation: while there was no doubt that the RUC and intelligence services had supplied them with weapons, they acted for themselves. Ms. Vargo said that it seemed that the Loyalists were genuinely prepared to embrace politics.
25. Mr. Teahon repeated that the talks process would be a hard grind. Progress to date had been glacier-like and Senator Mitchell had shown commendable patience. Ms. Vargo said that the Senator had been debating whether or not to take the job. He had decided he would accept only if he were given sufficient control and that he would refuse if his hands were going to be tied behind his back. Mr. Teahon said it was not so much a question of control as recognising that the talks would be a hard grind. Unionists were very good at applying logic, albeit from an incorrect opening premise. They had some very clever people, such as Mr. Peter Robinson.

26. Ms. Vargo asked about Mr. Hume's role in the talks. Mr. Teahon indicated - to Ms. Vargo's evident surprise - that Mr. Hume had not yet been participating to any significant degree. He added that it was a bit unfair on Mr. Mallon, who was bearing most of the pressure, although Messrs. Durkan and Attwood were also contributing. Mr. Teahon mentioned that earlier in the day, he had suggested to the British that if they knew that no real progress was going to be made in the talks until October, they should abandon the idea of having further talks sessions in July, to avoid putting Mr. Mallon under unnecessary pressure.
27. Ms. Vargo asked why it was that Mr. Hume was not playing his part. Mr. Teahon said that Mr. Hume was not a great man for the kind of detailed discussion currently underway. The undersigned added that Mr. Hume was probably waiting for the talks to get real.
28. Ms. Vargo asked if Mr. Trimble was playing an active role in the talks. Mr. Teahon indicated that he was present at all times and referred in passing to Mr. Taylor's brooding presence in the third row of seats behind Mr. Trimble. Mr. Teahon also mentioned that Dr. Paisley attended from time to time, adding that he had the impression that Mr. Peter Robinson was prepared to do a deal. Mr. Teahon also referred to the useful role being played by the Women's Coalition.
29. Ms. Vargo asked about relations between the Tánaiste and the Unionists. Mr. Teahon indicated that there were reasonably satisfactory, although it was evident that Mr. Trimble was more at ease in dealing with the

Attorney General. Mr. Teahon also mentioned that the UUP were happy enough to have bilaterals with the Irish Government side.

30. Ms. Vargo indicated that she/Senator Kennedy were prepared to do anything they could to assist. She added that the attitude on their side was that the debate going on in Sinn Féin/IRA was a matter for themselves to resolve and that they were powerless to influence it. It was not a question of putting pressure on the British Government or anyone else.
31. Mr. Teahon suggested that it might be useful to press Sinn Féin to say, honestly, what their real strategy was. He added that Dr. Mansergh felt that Sinn Féin had almost stopped being honest with themselves.
32. The meeting concluded shortly afterwards.

S. Hare
Simon Hare
July, 1996