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6 August 1997

No of pages including this one: 3

To: HQ
For: D Cooney

From: Belfast
From: Joint Secretary

Subj: Meeting between Secretary of State and Sinn Féin

1. I have obtained the following preliminary read-out on the meeting which took place at Castle Buildings this afternoon between the Secretary of State and a Sinn Féin delegation led by Gerry Adams.

2. A fuller account will be provided once a note on the meeting becomes available and, in any event, at the Liaison Group on Friday.

3. The mood of the meeting was very amicable, even jovial on occasion, and the British side expressed themselves well satisfied with it afterwards. A good rapport appears to have been established between the Secretary of State and Gerry Adams. Although there was little substantive engagement today on the various points raised by Sinn Féin, the British side gave them a good hearing and the discussion was uncontentious throughout. It was agreed that another meeting would be arranged in due course and phone numbers were exchanged for this purpose between the relevant junior members of each delegation.

4. The meeting began, I understand, around 12.30pm (having been delayed by a session between the Secretary of State and her security advisers on the outlook for this weekend's parades) and continued for approximately three hours. The Secretary of State was accompanied by Paul Murphy, Quentin Thomas, Stephen Leach and Chris McCabe. Gerry Adams was accompanied by Martin McGuinness, Caoimhin O Caolain, Lucillita Breatnach and Martin Ferris.

5. Much of the discussion consisted of a detailed rehearsal by Sinn Féin of their key preoccupations, in particular their concerns about confidence-building measures in the areas of prisons and the de-escalation of security force presence and activity. Sinn Féin made a relatively brief reference to their concerns about the handling of

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decommissioning in the political talks. The Bloody Sunday issue, on the other hand, was the subject of a lengthy intervention from Martin McGuinness.

6. The British side took note of the various points, which were presented to them in terms broadly familiar from the earlier exchanges between Quentin Thomas and Martin McGuinness. They had a sense that Sinn Féin were mainly concerned with putting their concerns on the record and were not necessarily seeking a detailed engagement on them at today's meeting.

7. In overall terms, the British view of the meeting was that it was a constructive encounter with positive "mood music" which placed the Secretary of State "firmly on course" for the decision which she is to take before the end of the month on Sinn Féin entry to the talks.

8. The British Government and Sinn Féin briefed the press separately after the meeting. A press release issued by the Secretary of State is attached and I understand that Sinn Féin also issue a statement.

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NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service

6 August 1997

MEETING WITH SINN FEIN, 6 AUGUST 1997

The Secretary of State, Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP, and Political Affairs Minister, Mr Paul Murphy MP, today met a delegation from Sinn Fein at Stormont.

Speaking after the meeting the Secretary of State said that she had been able to invite Sinn Fein to meet her because of the IRA ceasefire. She hoped circumstances would enable further meetings to take place.

"I took the opportunity to tell Sinn Fein face-to-face that I was pleased that the IRA had declared a ceasefire. I expressed the hope that it would be reflected in words and deeds so that Sinn Fein could join the Talks process.

"I stressed that Government is anxious to see a genuinely inclusive talks process and that in the light of events on the ground I will assess the situation at the end of the month and decide if circumstances enable me to invite Sinn Fein to talks on 9 September, in advance of the start of substantive negotiations on 15 September. I hope that will be the case.

We discussed a wide range of issues including prisoners, parades, equality of treatment, security and other confidence building measures. I confirmed that the Government remains committed to the joint paper on decommissioning and urged Sinn Fein to work to achieve the earliest possible decommissioning of all paramilitary weapons. I also encouraged the delegation to use all its influence to build community confidence in every way possible.

"I stressed that the talks will be taken forward on 15 September on the basis of adherence to the Mitchell principles and that this was the only realistic way ahead. We are totally committed to the principle of consent, fairness, justice and equality of treatment for all the people of Northern Ireland."

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