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Private Secretary
The Taoiseach may wish to see the
report of last Saturday's meeting
following clearance of it by Gerry
Dalton and Ó hUiginn
much water has flowed under bridges since then
27.6.97
Mr McHenry
S.H. 27617

SECRET

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Meeting between officials and representatives of Sinn Féin.

8.15am Saturday, 14 June, 1997

Present were:

Official Side: Mr T Dalton, Mr S Ó hUiginn, Mr W Kirwan

Sinn Féin Side Mr Gerry Adams, Mr Martin McGuinness, Mr Aidan McAteer, Ms Rita O'Hare

(Note: On the previous evening, the British Government had passed to Sinn Féin an Aide Memoire, covered by a letter to Mr McGuinness (copies attached to this report). These had been seen by the SF representatives about 11pm the previous evening but by Mr McAteer only that morning, when the official side gave him a copy. On the previous evening, about 10pm, the official side had received the Aide Memoire from No 10 Downing Street but had the opportunity to discuss it only from 7.40am, in advance of the meeting. Before the meeting convened, the Sinn Féin delegation held a side meeting of their own to discuss the papers).

1. Mr Ó hUiginn said that the Aide-Memoire was a good effort by the new British Labour Party Government. It represented the culmination of a long and purposeful effort by the Irish Government with Labour, when in Opposition. The Aide-Memoire reflected inputs in recent days by the Irish and US Governments and incorporated improved formulations to meet points we had made. The British Government realised that the merry-go-round in the talks process was affecting their credibility. They did not wish to see them drag out, without results. They were now moving to tackle this issue directly. Any attempt to stop the music, such as was now happening, was necessarily on a take it or leave it basis.
2. The Government had spent a lot of time and energy trying to ensure that the handling of the decommissioning issue in the talks would be in line with our perspective of it as a very important goal to be achieved, as one issue among many in the process rather than as, itself, the goal of the process or its motor. These efforts had continued since the new Government had taken office in London and this time the issue was being got right. The new Government was not using it as a way to block fully inclusive negotiations.

3. Prime Minister Blair is prepared to test what results can be got from the talks - but not to allow them to drag out. He also wants to test now whether the talks are to be with the participants of the 1992 talks or more fully inclusive. We agree on both scores. The British Labour Government would probably not wait long before making up its mind on these various aspects of the talks. The Aide-Memoire responded, in different words, to the paper of 10 October, 1996.
4. Mr Ó hUiginn said that it was important that all parties understood where we were in the process. Any deal to which the Irish Government would be a party would always relate to a full restoration of the ceasefire, not to a twin-track strategy by the Republican Movement. There could never have been, under any Irish Government, any case for a deal by reference to a twin-track approach, because any such deal could never be sustained. It could only lead into a swamp and would step over to the wrong side of the line an Irish Government must adhere to. On the right side of the line, the Government could do a great deal in regard to the concerns of republicans; on the wrong side of the line, it could do nothing.
5. In another month, the Republican Movement would be longer back at war than it had been on ceasefire. This left the Government side dealing in doubtful circumstances. The Government side could no more do business with Republicans if they were bent on a twin-track process than Sinn Féin could do business with officials on the basis that they were 'nice guys' with good intentions, if there was no delivery on matters of concern to Republicans. If and as it crystallises that Republicans are pursuing a twin-track approach, the Government side would have to walk away. We had now come to a point of definition and it was time to fish or to cut bait.
6. Mr Adams said that when Sinn Féin heard that the British were going to send them a paper, they had felt it important to convey to us that it should not be sent unless it would do the job. In Sinn Féin internal discussions, Mr McGuinness had said it that it would be very interesting to see if the British were going to send the letter in any case [comment: this seemed to mean: even if there was not assurance that it would be satisfactory to Republicans]. They (Sinn Féin) were trying to get their hands around their proposed meeting with the British, which should be choreographed carefully. Mr McGuinness's team (i.e. for talks with British officials) had noted that the British appeared to be accelerating

the process. It was important for Sinn Féin to obtain an understanding: was this acceleration to hand out an ultimatum or was it to get stability before Drumcree or was it because the Americans were pushing?

6. Mr Adams said that Sinn Féin had no interest in a twin-track approach. Any meeting they held was aimed at securing an inclusive process in a totally peaceful atmosphere. There was a situation where they had persuaded people to stop armed struggle. This had restarted and they now had to repersuade. The (Sinn Féin) people around the table did not want to talk peace and make war. They do understand, even if they do not agree, why Governments might have to close the shutters (in a twin-track situation). This would not be right but they understood why it might have to happen. But what would the British do, as an alternative to dialogue - lock them all up, intern them, try to work out a settlement with the other parties? This was no longer possible when Sinn Féin represented 40-45% of Northern nationalists. The latter remembered the reaction, or lack of it, to violence from other quarters - the bomb outside Sinn Féin's Falls Road office, the killing of John Slane - still without any explanations forthcoming - and they had to listen to nonsense about Orange marches. The Irish Government could have its position - but making peace out of the conflict is going to be difficult.

7. Mr Ó hUiginn commented that Billy Wright was stirring difficulties up again. But the Irish Government, too, had to look at a bottom line. It might seem odd to say so, with a new Government likely to take office soon. Sinn Féin could check directly with the likely Government leadership but he (Mr Ó hUiginn) saw the situation as determined by objective factors. We were at a point of definition. We were going to test the formula of the present talks to see if it can be made to work. After 1½ years, it really was necessary to take the talks in hand. Sinn Féin and those who support it could not be ignored. However, there was a fundamental difference between trying to build bridges for Republicans into democratic politics and association with a bankrupt policy that has failed (i.e. the tactical use of armed struggle).

Mr Adams responded that this point was taken.

8. Mr Ó hUiginn said that the Irish Government assessment of the Aide-Memoire was that the new British Government were trying to put in place the basis for an inclusive talks process and were seeking to make this work, rather than for it to fail. Insofar as a professional assessment

could give guidance, this British Government should be trusted and the initiative in the Aide-Memoire should be taken seriously.

9. The Aide-Memoire aimed to respond to the 10 October paper. It omitted some things that were in that paper. The only reason for that was all these things were in the Ground Rules and the Rules of Procedure and, by now, were taken for granted.
10. Mr Adams asked was there anything we wished to have excluded from the paper that was still in it. Mr Ó hUiginn responded in the negative. In broad brush terms, the paper was, in our view, satisfactory. We had pressed for changes, in regard to language on decommissioning, prisoner issues and cultural/linguistic issues and the British had met us satisfactorily. We had not focused particularly on the period for entry to talks, which were likely to come to a fairly clean suspension for a summer break, in such a way that would, in practical effect, give Sinn Féin parity with other participants.
11. Mr Dalton said that the Irish Government side saw the Aide-Memoire as a final document, not a paper slapped down ultimatum-fashion but rather the culmination of a long process. We saw it as the end of the road, as a statement that should be helpful to Sinn Féin. It was as good as we were going to get by way of a compromise and was, in effect, what we had long been struggling to obtain.
12. Mr Adams asked whether David Trimble had been taken through the Aide-Memoire. Mr Ó hUiginn said: no, Secretary of State Mowlam had had a meal with him within recent days and may have sounded him on the paper's concepts but the paper itself remained confidential.
13. Mr McGuinness asked whether it was an agreed document, as between the British and Irish Governments. Mr Ó hUiginn said that for all practical purposes, that was the position. The Irish Government side saw it as a document meeting satisfactorily all the points stemming from the process initiated by the 1994 ceasefires. If Sinn Féin could not work on this basis, the conclusion for the Government would be that they could not work on any basis that could be acceptable.
14. Mr Adams recalled that Sinn Féin had been told that the two Governments were working together on a document dealing with decommissioning. There had been no mention of any paper such as the

Aide-Memoire now received. Sinn Féin had deferred their meeting with British officials in order to allow time for the Governments to first settle the decommissioning issue between them. Then the present paper had unexpectedly come into the picture. Had it come as a surprise to the Irish Government? Mr Ó hUiginn denied this. On the substance, we had not been surprised, as the paper represented the culmination of a lengthy process of discussions. The actual call to stop the music had come somewhat more quickly than had been expected and the draft of the Aide-Memoire had been received only 1½ days ago.

15. Mr Adams said that it was important for Sinn Féin to understand whether the paper was an attempt to stop the lights as regards interaction between the Irish and British Government (comment: he appeared to mean-on the terms for entry into the talks). Mr Ó hUiginn responded that the Irish Government were signed up to the paper, as regards its main concepts. We saw it as a reasonable reflection, all things considered, of serious discussions we had had with the British. In our view, the basis for talks we had understood was to arise from August 1994 is now on the table.
16. There was a tactical dimension that Republicans would do well to consider. The Unionists, when they become aware of the position set out in the Aide-Memoire, might walk away from the talks. The Irish Government interpret the paper's reference to 15 September as meaning that the talks would go ahead regardless of the Unionist position. That might take the form of interaction between the two Governments. But it was important that the Unionists should engage, as the process would be somewhat hollow without them. Moreover, it would be important to move them towards a psychology of negotiations. A commentator had noted that no future election would give as good results to unionism as the recent one in Northern Ireland. It could, perhaps, be inferred from things Trimble was saying and from his silences on other matters that he was drawing the implications of that reality.
17. Mr Adams asked what sense the Irish Government side had as to how the British would handle the marching season. Mr Ó hUiginn had said that we were now back to the August, 1994 basis. That had been about real negotiations to bring about deep change in constitutional and other areas. Sinn Féin would have to persuade people that there was now a level playing pitch and that the British were going to stand up to unionists. Thus, how the marching season would be handled was vital. The present was a moment of definition for everyone.

18. Mr Ó hUiginn said that he would return to this aspect but wished first to finish the point about possible Unionist reactions to the Aide-Memoire. To some extent, it was calling Unionists' bluff - but it might well be marketed to unionists by the British as calling Sinn Féin's bluff. It might be that a part of the British assessment was that Unionists would calculate that Sinn Féin was unable to deliver. It was important to break down the Unionists' psychological barrier and to get them involved in inclusive negotiations. Mr Adams agreed that the objective had to be to get Unionists involved, even if Paisley were to walk out.
19. In regard to marches, Mr Ó hUiginn said that we could not give a definite answer. The Government had been encouraging all the various individuals and groups making attempts at mediation, on the basis that our direct, overt involvement would only inflame some interests concerned and would not be seen as impartial. It was a neck and neck race between people who thought that the whole thing was crazy and those who were out at the limits on either side. Mr Adams recalled that another Northern politician, perhaps Dr Alderdice, had said to him that some Unionists would wish to use the parades issue to test the new British Government. Mr Kirwan noted that the Secretary of State had indicated firmly that she would not tolerate any attempts to close ports or airports, as last year, and that the necessary security resources would be in place to ensure this could not happen.
20. Mr Adams said he had seen the issue as simply involving Orange extremists who just wanted to walk down the roads but his interlocutor had seen it as this plus the additional element of testing the British Government.

Mr Ó hUiginn noted that these aspects related to the stupid element. Mr Adams responded that the difficulty was that the leader of Unionism was involved. Even in conversations Martin McGuinness had had in South Africa, unionists were saying that David Trimble has to march down Garvaghey Road in 1997. The issue here was equality. Mo Mowlam had talked to the Residents' Association and to others and he noted from media reports that she was now about to try another approach.

21. Mr Ó hUiginn said that the Irish Government would be trying to encourage accommodation. We did not know the precise intentions in regard to the half-dozen neuralgic parades. One could speculate that on

the basis of probability, some marches would go ahead where people would prefer they did not. There would be a couple of sops to marchers, possibly in non-neuralgic areas. Mr Adams repeated that their questions were aimed at understanding how serious was the Labour Government. Mr Ó hUiginn noted that those "in the know" would be aware of cases where, last year, Sinn Féin had urged restraint. Any attempts they would make in this direction this year would be favourably noted by the British Government. Mr Adams said that Sinn Féin were pulling together their people who had dealt with the parades issue last year.

22. Mr McGuinness said that nobody should underestimate how difficult a task would face people trying to "keep the lid on things" this year. The news that Orangemen had filed to hold the Drumcree parades along Garvaghey Road gave a message of inevitability - that Unionists were 'going to have their céilí'. He had recently been in South Derry, talking to people in Bellaghy, where feelings were running very high, where people were incensed that in an 80% nationalist town, 10 Unionist marches take place. In Bellaghy, these go not to places of worship but from the latter to the centre of the town. In Derry, the people had the impression that the Orange Order county demonstration had deliberately been fixed for the city, as a response to last year's controls on Apprentice boys' parades. Mr Ó hUiginn noted that Orange Order county demonstrations rotate among the various district centres in a county, to which Mr McGuinness responded: "it's all about perceptions".
23. Mr Adams said that the discussion underlined the vital necessity to avoid or to head off the trouble that parades could cause. Sinn Féin were going to try. He had met the Garvaghey Road residents, while Mr McGuinness had met people in Bellaghy. It should be understood in the South that the murder of Seán Brown was equivalent in Co Derry to Barney Rock in Dublin or Pat Spillane in Kerry.
24. Reverting to the Aide-Memoire, Mr Dalton noted that one thing that had convinced the Irish Government side that the British Government was serious was the way it had swept aside difficulties that were there before. Thus, following an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire, Sinn Féin would get access to Castle Buildings. Moreover, there was now a stated fixed date for their entry into talks and also a fixed date for the commencement of substantive negotiations. The Mitchell Report was also dealt with sensibly in the Aide-Memoire.

25. Discussion then turned to the content of the Aide-Memoire. Mr Ó hUiginn indicated that the Irish Government regarded the paragraphs on Sinn Féin entry and the wish for inclusive negotiations as satisfactory. The reference to "and in any case by September" signalled the lights would stop on decommissioning by then, regardless of Unionist reactions. The two Governments would have a September rendezvous, one way or the other. The Irish Government were not oblivious of Unionist concerns but this formulation was seen by us as a quantum leap forward.
26. Mr Adams asked had an agenda been looked at, as between the two Governments. Mr Ó hUiginn said that, as per the Rules, the Agenda is whatever the different sides put on the table. In formal terms, there was an agenda, framed in generic terms, signed up to by the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP but not yet formally adopted. The precise working out of this would be for the participants but, in practice, the generic areas were wide enough to embrace any subject any participant might wish to raise. In response to a query, it was indicated that the draft agenda could be given to Sinn Féin who could see that nothing they would wish to raise would be excluded. It was pointed out that the phrase "having made a political judgement of all the circumstances in the round" was intended to convey that the Secretary of State saw the decision on Sinn Féin entry as a political decision.
27. In regard to the period of six weeks, Mr Ó hUiginn said that, when in opposition, Mo Mowlam had agreed that the period was "not real" in terms of what it would prove as to the long-term intentions of the Republican Movement or, indeed, in the historical perspective. But the Labour Government had inherited the period issue from their predecessors. They did not wish to allow commentators to say that they were naive nor did they wish to give Unionists a hook on which to hang a walkout. Labour had been prepared to consider allowing for a perceived de facto ceasefire period but recent incidents had scuppered that.
28. The practical scenario would be that the talks would go into summer recess, so that no business would be going ahead without Sinn Féin. They would have speedy access to Castle Buildings and the other opportunities set out in the Aide-Memoire. The formal finding in regard to admission to the talks would come in "some six weeks". Under Mr Major, the waiting period was a tactic to keep Sinn Féin out of the talks

but the new Labour Government is using the period solely as a defence mechanism against potential critics. We had urged that, in the presentation, there should be "no negatives" for any party. The response had been to add the sentence saying that the period should be used constructively to take account of the needs of all parties. This could be seen as a British signal that they would manage the period, in symbolic terms, in a good way.

29. Mr Adams said that the Sinn Féin position was that they should be in talks now. He went on, quickly, to ask whether the sentence with the reference to a ceasefire by mid-June was by way of illustration of the operation of a six week period or was it referring to just one, single acceptable situation. Would the six weeks run from whatever date a ceasefire came on? Did it mean that a ceasefire at the beginning of July would have Sinn Féin into talks by mid-August?
30. Mr Ó hUiginn said that there were two points to make in response. It is clear that, in the paper, the focus as regards real serious negotiations is on September. However, we had been saying strongly to the British that they should not hold off on clarifying their position until September, for the sake of doing so. Thus, we saw the reference to end-July as by way of a positive response to this point of ours.
31. Mr Adams said that if the 6 weeks did not run from any ceasefire date, they would have difficulty in their task of persuasion. The issue was : if there was going to be a cessation but that it could not be before a certain time, would Sinn Féin get equality of treatment? Republicans would look at what happened the last time they had a cessation. From an IRA point of view, the mistake last time was that the date of talks involving Sinn Féin was not fixed, allowing the British to put up a series of barriers to Sinn Féin participation.
32. Mr Ó hUiginn said that the Irish Government were starting from the position that negotiations on substantive issues would start by 15 September, one way or the other, with or without Sinn Féin. Within the period up to then, we took it that within some 6 weeks from an unequivocal cessation, the legal determination by the Secretary of State as to Sinn Féin entry would have been made.

There was one proviso to this. If 15 September came earlier than the end of the 6 week period, one could foresee, as a matter of practical politics,

that people would be shifting towards a psychology adapted to non-inclusive negotiations. In these circumstances, one would be looking at a different politics. Efforts to hold the door open for Sinn Féin entry would then be wasteful of political credit. Mr Dalton added a practical point - that the end-July - mid-September interval, in its length, would be as long as was desirable to allow Unionists to get used, over the summer, to the idea of inclusive negotiations.

33. Mr Ó hUiginn summed up that the mid-June/end July reference was only by way of example. The 6 weeks period would kick off, irrespective of the date of a ceasefire. The reference to July was, as previously indicated, in response to Irish pressure. If, on the first prospects of access for Sinn Féin, Unionists threatened to walk out, the period would allow them to cool off before the real substantive negotiations would get under way in September.
34. Mr Adams said that Republicans would need flesh on the bones of this, clarification that if there was a ceasefire now, Sinn Féin would be treated the same as other participating parties. A meeting with a British Government Minister would need to happen as quickly as possible.
35. Mr Ó hUiginn said that, subject to any views of the next Government, there would be scope for confidence-building measures on the side of the Irish Government. Mr Adams said again that a Ministerial meeting (I understood this to be with the British) should follow fast after a ceasefire. Mr Ó hUiginn said the Irish Government took for granted that this would happen. Mr Adams noted that the actual words in the Aide-Memoire were that "Ministerial meetings with Sinn Féin would be possible" :this was not a guarantee. Mr Ó hUiginn suggested that Sinn Féin should raise these matters with British officials at the meeting planned between them. However, recalling that rapid Ministerial meetings had already been envisaged in the November paper under the John Major Government, we took it that an early meeting would present no difficulty for the Labour Government. He again referred to the sentence referring to "the needs of the parties"; one of Sinn Féin's needs was clearly to have equality of treatment.
36. On the paragraph dealing with the timeframe, Mr Ó hUiginn said that in the Irish Government view, completion of the negotiations in the period September, 1997 - May, 1998 was seen as an ambitious goal.

37. On the paragraph on decommissioning, Mr Ó hUiginn recalled that the issue had been used as a spoiling tactic by the Unionists and by the British Government. The Irish Government would, of course, always be an advocate of decommissioning. We did not see it as a precondition for sitting down to the talks table but it might well be a precondition for rising from the table with an agreement.
38. Decommissioning was, as we saw it, a very emotional issue for unionist people. Parallel decommissioning is a very logical interpretation of the Mitchell Report. We understood the Sinn Féin attitude and had frequently explained it to the British, in terms as to where either the Irish Government or Sinn Féin should use up its political credit - on getting some front-loaded decommissioning or on getting a ceasefire and agreement in talks. When the issue was posed in that way, most people see the reality. We considered that the Labour Government was sympathetic to bringing the decommissioning issue back to its proper proportion in the overall negotiation. They accepted the amendments we proposed to the Aide-Memoire and that the only way forward was on the basis of working towards implementation of all aspects of the Mitchell Report. The Labour people, borrowing a term from us, had accepted that decommissioning would, necessarily, be backloaded in the overall negotiation and that too hard a test for Republicans, in the early stages, was "not on". The Government have pointed out to the British that it would be disastrous to "force Sinn Féin out of talks", on an issue which nationalists do not, based on their historical perspective, see as so important - viz decommissioning.
39. If Sinn Féin were once admitted to the talks, any question of expulsion would be, under the rules, a matter for the two Governments. The Irish Government, by itself, would have the ability to block any attempt to expel Sinn Féin. Insofar as some Republicans would say that, procedurally, Sinn Féin could be excluded if they were deemed not to be engaging adequately on decommissioning, they could rely on us to keep them in. Of course, it would be another case altogether if the Irish Government itself came to the view that the Republican Movement was "messing".
40. We wished to see decommissioning dealt with in an orderly way. As we saw it, either of two things would happen. One was that if Sinn Féin were in, one would get a more sensible reaction. It need not be beyond the bounds of possibility that Loyalists and Sinn Féin would begin to talk

openly and honestly and that all the complications of mutuality would bring home to all concerned that there was a need to examine and tease out the matter in great detail and that this would, inevitably, take time.

41. Mr Adams asked about the work in train between the two Governments on decommissioning. The two Governments would have to have an agreed position, one that was satisfactory, before Sinn Féin could persuade the relevant people to have a new cessation. Mr Ó hUiginn noted that, in Ireland, we were between two Governments, although the present Government remained fully in control. This factor had affected the pace of work - but the bottom of page 2 of the Aide- Memoire was a good summary of the emerging package on how to handle decommissioning. Mr Adams asked whether the two Governments had agreed a paper. Mr Ó hUiginn said that the Irish side had no wish to drag matters out but needed to be sure that any positions it took would have a shelf-life. There had, with Government approval, been some contacts with representatives of the prospective incoming Government. These might lead to Irish ideas we were sure would have a shelf-life to be put forward.
42. Mr. Adams said that Sinn Féin wanted clarity on this issue, which was the nub or the crux. If they were to ask the IRA to sign on to something, such clarity was essential. The devil was in the detail. Sinn Féin would presume that they would be taken up, down and over any such paper on decommissioning, as people would wish to understand it in full detail. He asked whether they could have sight of the paper and when?
43. Mr. Dalton said that in the Irish view, the settling of rules and schemes for decommissioning would take a lot of time and discussion between the two Governments and other interested parties. This would allow the Irish Government to ensure that matters were not brought to the point of definition at a time all the requisite pieces were not in place.
44. Mr. Adams remarked on the tendency for the decommissioning issue to dominate and skew or tilt the agenda to one side. The intensity of discussion on this subject was not paralleled on other issues. Mr. Ó hUiginn again stressed the need to distinguish between the approaches under the Tory and Labour Governments in Britain. We now had reasonable confidence that the latter would not use the issue to trap Sinn Féin. The Unionists have the formal capacity to block anything - but if they did so, they would suffer consequences. In those circumstances, the

two Governments would have to find ways to bypass such Unionist opposition and, thus, necessarily, to bypass the present rules for the talks.

45. Mr. Trimble has said that he wants the issue pigeonholed. That has good and bad aspects, potentially. Mr. Adams interjected to say that Mr. Trimble wanted talks without Sinn Féin involvement - but that if Sinn Féin were nevertheless to come in, the decommissioning blockage would be put back in play. Mr. Kirwan noted that the new Labour Government appeared ready to bypass the Unionists or, indeed, this roundtable configuration of the talks.
46. Mr. Adams returned to the decommissioning paper. What stage had been reached? It was necessary to be clear about what was doable. It would be a great pity if the present Irish Government or the next, agreed to a paper and Sinn Féin, seeing it belatedly, were left to make points, too late, on what should have been in the paper. Mr. Dalton felt that if we secured the slight tweaking of the paper we were seeking, the paper would, in his judgement, then be satisfactory enough that it should be acceptable to Sinn Féin.
47. Mr. Adams again emphasised that Sinn Féin would surely be asked what have the two Governments agreed on decommissioning? Mr. Dalton asked was this an indication that decommissioning is now the critical element for a ceasefire. Mr. Adams replied that there needed to be absolute clarity on this issue. Some issues do not admit of any scope for interpretation. What were the differences? Did they relate to procedures and protocol or were they on substance?
48. Mr. Ó hUiginn indicated that the Government side did not envisage giving Sinn Féin sight of any intermediate drafts of the paper on decommissioning. If it went down the road, we would try to ensure that they were made aware of its contents. In response to a question from Mr. Adams, he confirmed that a copy of the paper would be given to Dr. Martin Mansergh. Mr. Adams emphasised that Sinn Féin were trying to avoid faits accomplis. Mr. Ó hUiginn said that no paper had yet been given by the Irish to the British side. We were also trying to ensure that there would be a satisfactory agreement between the two Governments as to the deployment of the paper, with particular reference to an agreed scenario if the Unionists sought substantially to amend the paper, in the event of its being tabled. In such circumstances, we would want the British Government to also take a firm line and not leave all the strain of

doing so on the Irish Government. Irish officials would bear in mind the points made by Sinn Féin.

49. At this point, Mr. McGuinness, who had been briefly out of the room, returned and Mr. Adams recapitulated, for his benefit, the discussion reported in the previous two paragraphs. Mr. McGuinness said that the problem was that, among Republicans, there was great distrust of, a complete lack of faith in, the British Government. There were some people still within the British system who had a military mindset. Mr. Dalton commented that such people appeared now to be in a minority. Mr. McGuinness said this is important.
50. Mr. Dalton referred to the timetable now as to plenary sessions in the talks and to the contacts taking place with the likely next Government. Mr. Adams asked was the sense that the two Governments would agree a paper and do so with a mind to reduce the decommissioning issue to one that needs to be dealt with in negotiations rather than act as a block to negotiations? Was it the case that the sequence would be agreed, before the process of inclusive negotiations would be agreed? Irish Government officials might be able to deal, indirectly with the incoming Government. It was also possible that Sinn Féin would be able to deal within the period of office of the present Government in the South.
51. Mr. Ó hUiginn said that the summary in the Aide-Memoire of the proposed approach to decommissioning was accurate. There were few problems of substance between the two Governments but the Irish side want to get a satisfactory agreement on deployment. It was also important - and Sinn Féin should remember this - not to marginalise the Unionists. The objective had to be to take two tricks together - Republicans and Unionists. Up to 15 September, the Irish Government side would be trying hard to secure an inclusive process: after that, this would be very difficult. There was a grey area as to David Trimble's reaction and Sinn Féin should remember the need not to give him any basis for a crusade. The test for Republicans should be that, in the multi-party talks, all procedures have to go through the Irish Government.
52. Mr. Adams said that one of the worries voiced by Sinn Féin's team dealing with the decommissioning issue was that even allowing the British were positively disposed to let the issue find it proper level, they had an each-way bet, in that the Unionists could be depended upon to

raise the issue for them. Mr. McGuinness asked whether David Trimble had a veto on progress in the talks? This was a Republican worry that they had put to the British. Mr. O hUiginn said that if Trimble was blocking all progress, the two Governments would need to consider the situation. The Governments would have to be ready to rewrite the rules. Trimble has a veto on anything that comes under the existing Rules of Procedure for these talks. But procedure is not life. He has to have regard to the costs of acting as a block. Procedurally, he could seek to block matter but not without cost, and not indefinitely. The Governments would have to get down to business. In that connection, we regarded the reference in the Aide-Memoire to starting negotiations on 15 September as an absolute commitment. The two Governments have a commitment that transcends the Rules of Procedure. The Irish side would not, however wish to jettison these rules completely, as there was a lot of useful things in them.

53. Mr. Ó hUiginn then went through the last paragraph on page 2 of the Aide-Memoire. He emphasised that "a commitment by each participant to work constructively and in good faith to implement all aspects of the Mitchell Report", was an Irish formulation. Republicans should not say that decommissioning was rubbish. They should, instead, work along the lines of the Sinn Féin submission to the International Body. "All aspects" brings in all aspects of confidence - building. Attention was drawn to the two sub-committees, one on decommissioning and one on confidence-building measures that the proposed committee of the plenary would have. In response to queries from Sinn Féin, who stressed their anxiety fully to understand the mechanics, it was made clear that it was the committee of the plenary that would deal with all aspect of decommissioning, not the independent verification commission. The latter would be experts and would operate outside the talks, in parallel. In answer to a query from Mr. McGuinness, it was confirmed that an international element was envisaged in this commission. The commission would inevitably spend a long time working out schemes and modalities and thus would not come to a head too early in the process but it would be important that nobody characterise their work as meaningless or futile.
54. Commenting on the Aide-Memoire's paragraph on confidence-building measures, Mr Ó hUiginn noted that the British had touched on the essential general principle of parity of esteem. The list that followed was somewhat focused on aspects of concern to the British Labour Party. As

regards further steps, we expect the British to do something in regard to Bloody Sunday. On prisoners, the Michael Howard factor will no longer operate. On economic and social issues, these were outcrops of Labour party philosophy, on which they could be expected to do the right thing. On the Irish language and social issues, even the previous British Government had made some progress on these and it could be expected that Labour would continue and enhance this. In our exchanges with the British, we had touched on most issues of concern to republicans, such as the holding of prisoners in Special Security Units (SSUs). They had acknowledged that it was desirable to make progress on these issues but indicated that they would be unable to do so too quickly.

55. This completed the run-through the Aide-Memoire. Mr Adams then said that there was every possibility that Sinn Féin would wish to have a further meeting with the Government side. It should not have to be necessary to go through the hoops of formally requesting a meeting. There should also be the maximum facility for contact in the interim . Sinn Féin took it that Ms O'Hare would quickly be given the agenda paper with the generic headings. Imagination should also be used to keep Sinn Féin in touch with the twists and turns of the decommissioning issue.
56. Republicans also had concerns about matters in the control of the Irish Government. They would like to see some structure in being, under which the Government could hold discussions with all Northern-based parties, including Unionists. Could there be some structure, involving the Department of the Taoiseach?
57. Mr Kirwan referred to Dáil replies by the Taoiseach in which he had given commitments that in the event of an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire, the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation could be convened again. The Forum had previously shown itself to be a flexible instrument, with sub-committees on various subjects and as providing an opportunity for political meetings at Dublin Castle. It could be further adapted, as necessary, to meet identified needs.
58. Mr Adams proposed that , on the hypothesis of a ceasefire, there should be a special committee, within the framework of which the Taoiseach could meet Northern representatives once a month. There should also be provision for Northern representatives to be heard in the Houses of the Oireachtas. He asked Irish officials to reflect imaginatively on these

aspects. Mr Ó hUiginn again referred to the merits of the Forum as an already existing structure, to the existence of which Unionists had become accustomed. New structures could make them edgy.

59. Mr Adams said there was also the question of extradition and of prisoners held in the Irish jurisdiction. He referred to the arrests of Messrs Kinsella and McNally. Mr Dalton thought it likely that in the event of a ceasefire, the Irish Government would revisit prisoner issues, in line with the policy followed during the previous ceasefire.
60. Mr Adams again referred to the need for some structural way of including representatives of all the Northern parties. Nationalists in the North had the right to representation. At present, they can only elect people to a legislature where members must take an oath of allegiance to the British monarch. People tolerate this for certain purposes but do not accept it. Mr McAteer stressed that this is an issue of the right to representation. Mr Adams said that Sinn Féin did not wish to flog this matter to death but that the Irish Government side should not underestimate its importance.
61. The same applied in relation to Dingus McGee, who had not seen his wife since 1994, because of his refusal to accept the visiting conditions. Everybody in West Belfast, where Mrs McGee was a well respected member of the community, knew about this. An improvement on this front would make a big impact.
62. Mr Adams, reverting to Sinn Féin's dealings with the British, said that they wished to have the maximum of information from us before even agreeing the principle of a further meeting with the British. The latter had indicated to them that, despite what had been said publicly by the Secretary of State, the next meeting need not necessarily be the last meeting. Following Mo Mowlam's statement, he had been previously scheduled to meet the press and because of his wish to avoid putting people on hooks, had contacted the British, for clarification. The British had said that Sinn Féin should not over or under-interpret what Ms Mowlam had said, that there could be a further meeting, if necessary.
63. Mr Ó hUiginn commented that, despite this, her public statement had put the British in a certain position and that Sinn Féin should work on the basis that the next meeting might indeed be the last. Mr Adams agreed. He said that, in any case, Sinn Féin wanted to see their engagement with

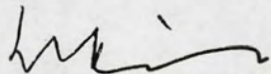
the British as part of a wider circle of engagement, which was necessary. Mr. Ó hUiginn said it should be clear that the Irish Government side were signing off on the British Aide-Memoire as satisfactorily meeting the points raised in the 10 October paper from Sinn Féin.

64. Mr. Adams said that Sinn Féin had told the British that they could not "do a meeting" on Monday (16 June). The British had then pushed for Tuesday. Sinn Féin had said that this would be difficult logistically for them, as commitments of relevant people had become "backed up" because of Paddy Kelly's funeral. This was, in fact, true but there was also the strategic aspect that Sinn Féin did not wish to have a meeting unless it would be able to "do the business". They consider a good meeting to be more important than a Tuesday meeting. The Irish Government side should reflect on this over the weekend. Ms. O'Hare would be around and Sinn Féin were meeting again on Monday to conduct a full assessment (it had earlier emerged that those present for Sinn Féin were going on directly to an Ard Chomhairle meeting).
65. Mr. Ó hUiginn noted that Mo Mowlam had now identified a presentational problem with any meeting with Sinn Féin on the Tuesday. This related to the timetable for plenaries in the talks. For other reasons, there would not now be a plenary on Tuesday and she did not wish to give an opening to critics to allege that this was because of a British Government meeting with Sinn Féin. Mr. Adams said that Sinn Féin were trying to keep the focus on this central issue but they had just fought three elections and their people were very stretched. They needed a little time to pull things together. Accordingly, they were thinking in terms of a meeting with the British when it was most beneficial to have it.
66. Mr. Dalton enquired, if Sinn Féin were to be satisfied after their meeting with the British, were there other issues that needed to be dealt with in order to secure a ceasefire. Mr. Adams responded by referring again to the issues for the Irish Government that he had raised - there was specific reference to prisoners and to the possibility of further contacts about these. Mr. McAteer also referred again to the option of another meeting with Irish Government officials, before Sinn Féin's meeting with the British.
67. Mr. Ó hUiginn commented that Sinn Féin should tell the British that they were not prevaricating, as delay would be open to that interpretation. He

reiterated that they should proceed on the basis that the next meeting would be the last, having regard to the public statement by Mo Mowlam. Mr. Adams suggested that it might help if the Irish Government were to say to the British that Sinn Féin were trying to focus their people and that the first possibility of a meeting was a little later. Mr. Ó hUiginn noted that Ambassador Barrington was likely to meet Prime Minister Blair at a function later that morning and that we could convey the message that the meeting this morning had been a good one.

68. Ms. O'Hare referred to the reference, in the British covering letter to Martin McGuinness, to an intention to make its position clear in public, probably at the end of the following week. Mr. Ó hUiginn said that the Irish side had emphasised to the British the vital need to get timing aspects right, that the IRA should not hear about the British Aide-Memoire for the first time by reading it in the newspapers. Mr. Adams said that we should say to the British that Martin McGuinness will speak to them on Monday night.
69. The meeting concluded at this point, at about 10.50 a.m. Subsequently, the undersigned, in talking to Mr. John Holmes of No. 10 Downing St. about setting up a side meeting at Amsterdam, made the following points:
- (1) that the Irish Government side were satisfied with the changes made in the Aide-Memoire by the British, in response to our suggestions and with the paper generally and had conveyed the latter to Sinn Féin;
 - (2) that, subject to the continuing need for scepticism in dealing with Sinn Féin, the morning's meeting had been encouraging;
 - (3) that the Irish side had conveyed that this was the end of the line, that this was an initiative by the new British Government that should be taken seriously and that the Irish Government had signed up to it;
 - (4) that the Sinn Féin representatives, while not positively endorsing anything, had shaped like people who felt there might be a basis in the paper for a ceasefire and who wished to clarify, with absolute precision, what was meant and envisaged by the various formulations in the paper;

- (5) that while referring, glancingly, to their stock position, they had not made much bones of the 6 weeks period, their detailed focus being, much more, on the scenario with respect to decommissioning, where they had enquired closely about progress by the two Governments towards agreeing a paper;
- (6) that, despite the difficulties we faced currently, we would seek, on our side, to expedite agreement on this paper.



Walter Kirwan,
Assistant Secretary,
Department of the Taoiseach,
18 June, 1997.