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Taoiseach
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PSM: PSS; Messrs. Teahon,
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Note of meeting between the Taoiseach and Messrs. Hume and Adams
25 July, 1997

Present were:

Government side: Taoiseach, Mr. Paddy Teahon, Mr. Sean Ó hUiginn, Dr. Martin Mansergh, Mr. Joe Lennon.

SDLP: Mr. John Hume

Sinn Féin Mr. Gerry Adams, Ms. Rita O'Hare.

1. The Taoiseach opening the meeting, welcomed the ceasefire and the fact that it was again possible for a meeting such as this to happen in normal circumstances. On behalf of himself and his Cabinet colleagues he congratulated all involved for their efforts in restoring the ceasefire. The Government appreciated fully the amount of work which went into that achievement. He drew attention to his speech the previous evening, which amounted to a comprehensive and considered statement of the Government position, made with the knowledge of key members of the Cabinet.
2. The Taoiseach recalled the contacts he had had with the British Prime Minister on the Talks process. The Irish Government would have liked the decommissioning paper to be approved. In an effort to be helpful, he had said to the British Prime Minister that if he could establish what exactly

would enable Trimble to stay with the Talks, the Irish Government would look at it very carefully and if a workable proposal had come forward, he would have gone back to Sinn Féin on that basis. Every effort would be made over the summer to get everyone around the table. A fully inclusive process was still the strong preference and the best approach. The Government did not want bilateral meetings going around in circles. The Taoiseach paid tribute to the engagement and commitment of Prime Minister Blair who was clearly giving the issue priority and was determined to grasp the opportunities.

3. Mr. Hume concurred strongly on this point. Only Ted Heath, if even he, had given the issue greater priority. Mr. Adams commended John Hume for staying with the project and also paid tribute to the work of officials in the contacts between the breakdown and restoration of the ceasefire. The present conjuncture of new Irish and British Governments, and President Clinton's second term, was very promising. People wanted to move ahead and to avoid the *faux pas* of last year.
4. Mr. Adams said it was important that the period between this and the reopening of the Talks should be used for confidence-building measures. There had been no discernable scaling down of the security presence in West Belfast. Confidence building measures were crucial to convince nationalists of the possibility of the issue being sorted out, even if "unionists messed about".
5. Mr. Hume said the timing of the ceasefire couldn't have been better, coming as it did in the marching season. He deplored irresponsible press coverage of the event. It was important that nationalists should not give the unionists "anything they can beat us with". It was important, within the process, to

emphasise the need for agreement. Outside the process, the Apprentice Boys' march in Derry on 12th August should go ahead with the agreement of nationalist leaders. It should be shown clearly that there was no sectarianism or triumphalism where nationalists were in a majority. The Apprentice Boys should be allowed to march the walls. Mr. Hume added that the prisoner question was very important for both sides.

6. The Taoiseach said that whatever confidence-building measures the Government could push, they would. He stressed the importance of confidence-building in all directions.
7. Mr. Adams quoted language from the New Ireland Forum, pointing to equal treatment of the unionist and nationalist traditions. That had been in 1984, and people who had not been born at that time were now witnessing Garvaghy Road. The equality agenda was long overdue. The prisoner issues, including the SSUs were very important.
8. The Taoiseach said the unionist community would focus on the strength of the ceasefire and how real it was. Every day the ceasefire continued, people were enabled to speak and act more confidently. He assumed that in West Belfast the security forces were adopting a wait-and-see approach. Mr. Adams said the Republican struggle had to go into the non-armed mode. The restoration of the ceasefire had caught a lot of IRA people by surprise. The recent past had been most eventful (new Governments in both jurisdictions, the Lurgan killing, the Garvaghy Road, sectarian killings of Catholics, etc.) and people had found it difficult to keep up with the pace of change. The IRA was still selling the ceasefire to their own people, and as a result the situation was "still bubbling". Sinn Féin had to have a climate of "constructive dissent". There was great pressure on Martin McGuinness and

himself to show that their proposals were not for a "Stickies, mark 10". All the signs were that this British Government was engaged. However, people needed to see a difference in their lives, and would then be patient as regards the Talks process itself.

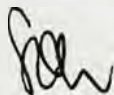
9. Mr. Hume agreed that the atmosphere was crucial. He had had dinner recently with the Governor of the Apprentice Boys. Many unionists were looking for a new approach. This was particularly true of the business community. He suggested the Taoiseach should develop his contacts with the "Group of Seven", Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions, etc.

10. Mr. O hUiginn mentioned the efforts the Embassy in London was making in regard to Irish prisoners there. He developed also the likely scenarios for the future of the Talks process, and the possibility the Governments might have to decide a new approach to get around Trimble's veto, under the sufficient consensus rule, against moving to substantive talks. Mr. Adams said that some prisoners were under the impression that they had been promised transfers before Christmas. If that was not already agreed, it was dangerous to make promises which might not be fulfilled. Mr. O hUiginn said that he believed this interpretation was a misunderstanding of the contacts which had taken place.

11. The Taoiseach raised the question of future contacts. It could be taken for granted that he would stay in close touch with the two leaders. He was open to the idea of setting up a committee or mechanism to include the Northern parties. He also was open to the value of occasional meetings of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation.

12. Mr. Adams said he assumed party leaders would meet at the Taoiseach's discretion. A pattern of meetings with parties, by invitation from the Taoiseach, would be helpful to Sinn Féin and enable them to get the broad view. The Taoiseach summarised the discussion that
- (a) Meetings with the individual leaders could happen as frequently as desired.
 - (b) The Government would see whether arrangements could be made for parties meeting with the Government as extensively as people wanted.
 - (c) Provision might be made for irregular meetings of the Forum.
13. Ms. O'Hare pointed to the value of meetings with the Department of Justice on prisoners. This was accepted.
14. Mr. Adams thought that contacts with the parties would be particularly valuable if the unionists were "just hanging around outside".
15. The Taoiseach said it would be very important to have an idea of what we wanted to come out of the negotiations. It was however realistic to accept that in such matters one did not always get exactly what one wanted.
16. Mr. Adams agreed that it was prudent to keep the last point in mind. It should be understood however that from the Sinn Féin point of view the pursuit of the objective of Irish unity was very important, whatever the timescale. Arrangements which could be perceived as transitional could be accepted, but if the outcome went down the partitionist road, it might well provoke unionists without satisfying nationalists.

17. Mr. Hume said the harsh reality was that we would not get a united Ireland out of the present negotiations. We needed an agreed Ireland. Following such an agreement, the real healing could begin and the real borders begin to be abolished. Mr. Adams accepted that Irish unity would not come out of this phase, but, he hoped, out of the process. The North was quiet between 1920 and 1969, but that did not mean that those arrangements amounted to a solution. He enquired about the position on Articles 2 and 3. The Taoiseach said the position was that everything he puts on the table, including constitutional change. He preferred to talk of revisiting the settlement of 1920 - 1921.
18. There followed a discussion on a communiqué, during which the attached joint statement was agreed.



Sean Ó hUiginn

25 July, 1997

Transcript of Press Conference
Taoiseach, John Hume and Gerry Adams
Government Buildings
Friday 25 July 1997

Taoiseach:

A statement from the three of us.

We are all committed to the achievement of lasting peace and reconciliation on this island based on justice and equality.

All-party engagement in inclusive political dialogue at this time is needed for the purpose of achieving agreement between all sections of the Irish people. We reiterate that we are totally and absolutely committed to exclusively democratic and peaceful methods of resolving our political problems. We recognise that ultimately we can resolve this problem only with the participation and agreement of the Unionist people.

All three of us endorse the principles set out in the Report of the New Ireland Forum and those that were agreed in the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. The challenge is to find the structures that will protect and accommodate the equal rights and identities of both Unionists and Nationalists, and that can obtain the consent and allegiance of all.

We look forward to the opening of substantive all-party negotiations on the 15 September. We have agreed to strengthen opportunities for consultation between the Irish Government and parties to the talks.

Journalist:

Taoiseach, your statement mentions particularly the Report on the New Ireland Forum and the agreed aspects of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, but it doesn't mention the Mitchell Principles. Is there any particular reason for that?

Taoiseach:

No there is not. The Mitchell Principles are agreed by us all.

Journalist:

Gerry Adams could I put it to you, one of the, I mean but one of the concerns were comments made by Mitchell McLoughlin in Stormont the other day talking about a concern He indeed since suggested this is a threat on a political process. How do you ... that?

Gerry Adams:

Well it wasn't a threat, that's first of all, and threats have no part in any of this. What Mitchell McLoughlin was doing was expressing I think the concern of everyone who is concerned to bring about a democratic peace settlement. That that should be done, it should be done with urgency. And I want to commend John Hume for his efforts in bringing about this situation. I want to commend the Taoiseach and all of the officials who have worked so hard. And I want also to commend our own Party and the Leadership of Sinn Fein, who never once faltered over the years and I do have to say that I think that the IRA decision was a courageous one. And it's up to we, who are in political leadership to build upon that, and to bring about the type of lasting peace which the people of this island deserve and desire.

Journalist:

Do you think in the search for methods to get you all around the table that you will have to move peace process to something entirely different or do you think the solution will be simple ..?

Gerry Adams:

Well it's about talks. I mean the Taoiseach needs to respond to that more so than me. But it's about talks and it's about people representing and putting forward their analysis and leading and from our prospective we will be going into talks to put forward our Republican analysis and to try and listen to others who have an opposite view.

John Hume:

I think it's also important to point out that no matter what peoples' attitudes are, that people who change their attitudes now and again, I am talking about political parties, the problem doesn't change. And therefore neither should the approach to resolving the problem and giving that central to our problem and this is agreed not only by both Governments but by all political parties, that central to our problem are the three sets of relationships. And the best possible way of resolving those is that both Governments be involved together with all the parties in the North and that is clearly the best way of resolving the problem to satisfaction on both sides. And my appeal to people today, about this

meeting, is don't be looking at the picture of the three of us, look at what we have said. Because we have made very clear that our objective is agreement among our divided people and we are making it clear that the problem cannot be resolved without the agreement of the Unionist people and we are making it clear that we are totally committed to the principles of the New Ireland Forum. And one of the central principles which we refer to in our statement, is that there are two sets of legitimate rights. The rights of the Unionist people to their identity. The rights of the Nationalist people to their identity and our challenge now is to accommodate them both. And I would hope that all sections of our people in this country would make sure that their political representatives are there to do it, so that for the first time in our history we can have agreement. The atmosphere now has improved enormously. When you consider Drumcree week and the atmosphere then and look at the atmosphere now. The statesmanship of the Orange Order in cancelling certain marches; the IRA declaring a total unequivocal renewal of their ceasefire; a completely new atmosphere. Our challenge now throughout the Summer and up until September is to keep building that positive atmosphere and get to that table all together, and lets stop the negative, and could I make a wee appeal to the media, would you try being positive, to all of you.

Journalist:

Taoiseach hasn't your predecessor John Bruton refused to meet Gerry Adams and John Hume together, clearly because he feels that this would give the wrong signal to Unionists. What is your position here?

Taoiseach:

Well I think I have even moved on from that. In my statement yesterday I have said that, needless to say any leader of a political party anywhere on the island of Ireland, and even most particularly, as I don't often have the opportunity, anyone from the North of Ireland that wishes to meet me I would meet them. But I have said in my statement last night that I intend to take the opportunity of meeting the leaders and not only the leaders, delegations from Northern parties that they would come on a fairly regular basis to meet me and that would not just be on a bilateral basis, that we could do that in a grouping and I will issue those invitations to all parties and hopefully in time, if not immediately, all of them would come to meet me. And I certainly know from both talking this morning to Gerry Adams and John Hume their parties are glad to take this up and I am sure many of the other parties will as well.

Journalist:

But does this picture of the three of you that John Hume mentioned not suggest to Unionists that Pan Nationalists

John Hume:

Did you not hear what I said to you. Read what we have said don't just look at pictures. And what we said is what we met about and we are making very clear in what we said that the resolution of this problem can only come about with the agreement of our people and with the allegiance of both sections of our people.

Taoiseach:

And I dearly hope Donal, that the day could be reached, in the not too distant future, when we could be here and that David Trimble and others would be here with us. If we are to make the kind of a breakthrough that the circumstances that have now happened have allowed us to develop, then I think we could all be here talking about issues that are to our mutual benefit trying to find a new accommodation where we can live better and where we can argue for the things that we all believe in, and that's the structures of the talks process. This meeting today should not be seen as a threat to anybody, it's only to try to find a means of accommodation and a means of moving forward and that's what we are going to spend our time doing.

Journalist:

Taoiseach what in the way of prospect of meeting David Trimble so that Sinn Fein

Taoiseach:

Well on the first question I would be glad to meet David Trimble at any time. My Minister for Foreign Affairs has had two bilaterals and trilateral meetings with him over the last two weeks. So we have quite engaged ourselves far more - than has been going on for a long time passed. I also said last night that I see some merit in having a meeting of the Forum again. I don't intend it because of the fact that we will be engaged in talks in the North from the 15th of September on that we will be meeting on a regular basis, but on an irregular basis, that is something I'd see that we do in the Autumn sometime.

Journalist:

Taoiseach on Tuesday Mo Mowlam will be meeting How would you characterise the challenge that they face now?

Taoiseach:

Well the important thing about Tuesday's meeting, to make sure that the two Governments remain in the driving seat. We are absolutely committed to the 15th of September. All of the conditions that were set down, we have been working to fulfil those. Now that there is an IRA ceasefire it allows Sinn Fein to take their position up in those talks. There are many other matters that we need to work on as well and we will be concentrating on those over the weeks of the Summer. I just hope that rather than us talking about what difficulties we might have after the 15th, and what form the talks will be, that we can find a way, some way that we can satisfy our bonafides to the Unionists and to David Trimble in particular, and to his colleagues that he will come within the format of those talks and that we can move on from there in the three strands and that is the sense that I find that on which we have to challenge ourselves and that Mo Mowlam and Ray Burke will be taking it up again on Tuesday.

Journalist:

(Geraldine Kennedy)

.... of parallel talks will Sinn Fein be

Gerry Adams:

Well I have to go back for a second to the question that Donal put. Because what this process has to be about is inclusiveness. And Sinn Fein is a party which represents citizens in both states on this island and those citizens have the right to the equality of treatment. So while we are trying to put together the substantive talks that are required there needs to be movement on the equality agenda and on confidence building measures. I think in terms of what form those talks will take, both Governments have given a commitment that they want to see substantive all-party talks beginning on the 15th of September to deal with all the core issues that the constitutional, political institutional issues that are involved here. And I think there are a number of weeks to go between now and then and let the two Governments do their best to bring those about. And what John Hume and I and the Taoiseach have done today has in a very transparent way, outlined our commitment to try and get agreement. And who could be afraid of talking, who could be afraid of sitting down around a table and trying to resolve this conflict.

Journalist:

Mr. Adams just to be clear on this. You are not ruling out alternative procedures ...

Gerry Adams:

I am not commenting on it. I am saying that the Governments have given a commitment for substantive all-party talks to begin on the 15th of September and Mr. Trimble hasn't ruled that out entirely. So lets not, as John Hume said, let the media be responsible in this, let those who have the influence and the ability to bring that about, work away at that.

Journalist:

Thank you.

ENDS.