

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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17 February 1999

Mr. Dermot Gallagher
Second Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin 2

Mr M'Carry
passed on to the
Taoiseach
18.2.99

Dear Secretary,

Prime Minister's Meeting with Gerry Adams

I spoke to John Sawers this morning about the meeting yesterday. Adams and the Prime Minister had met alone, so Sawers was reporting on the basis of Blair's own account to him.

Blair had found Adams to be in a "very reasonable mood". Adams had outlined his position in terms similar to his conversations with the Taoiseach, explaining in particular the difficulties within the republican movement in moving on decommissioning. Nonetheless, Adams had signalled his desire to find a way through, and the Prime Minister had the sense, for the first time, that Adams was now waking up to the huge gulf between Sinn Fein's position and that of David Trimble. Moreover, he appeared to realise that there was a real limit to Trimble's room for manoeuvre on the arms issue.

One of Blair's objectives was to encourage Adams and Trimble to meet and engage in direct dialogue. In this respect the British are encouraged by today's meeting between the two party leaders and hope that it will lead to a real engagement. Sawers commented that in many respects what he called mini-crises in the period since the Agreement had been resolved through direct engagement between the parties, and the British side felt that this such engagement would be important at this juncture also. I agreed with him on this, but he said that Adams's departure for a few weeks in Australia was not

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particularly helpful in allowing the time and opportunity to build trust between the two key protagonists.

I asked if Blair had any signal from Adams about our approach on the decommissioning issue, but Sawers said that he had "no sense of this from the Prime Minister". In any event, he said, the British have considerable "concerns" as to whether our approach is sufficient to meet Trimble's needs. He also suggested that de Chastelain may not "be certain" about our proposals, but said that they would be clearer on this after the General's round of meetings with the parties.

I would add, as already reported on the telephone, that I received a similar message of British doubt about the sufficiency of our proposals from Trimble's point of view from the new British Ambassador to Dublin, Ivor Roberts, when I met him yesterday.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Barrington
Ambassador

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