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***Summary of Meeting with Sinn Féin, Belfast, 15th September 1999***

1. Gerry Adams was accompanied by Aidan McAteer and Joe Reilly. Martin Mansergh, Tim Dalton and the undersigned were present on the Dublin side.

***Review***

2. Adams was very pessimistic about the prospects for the Mitchell Review. In particular, he had the most serious doubts about Trimble's intentions, and also about his capacity to deliver. We argued that Trimble's position may have changed in recent times. In the past, we suspected that his tactics were to play for as much time as possible. However, with the developing internal power struggle within the UUP, Trimble probably needed a positive outcome to the Review if he was going to be able to sustain his leadership

3. Adams emphasised that the key questions at this stage were Trimble's commitment to reaching agreement and, secondly, his capacity to deliver his party to any accommodation. We made the point that Trimble, for his part, would say that he did not have sufficient clarity in July on Blair's "seismic shift" to bring his party with him. This was also a problem that needed to be addressed during the Review.

4. In further discussion, Gallagher said he was struck by a recent article by Niall O'Dowd in which he seemed to suggest that if Mitchell redefined "jumping together", this might help provide a way forward. One way of doing this,

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Gallagher suggested, might be for the IRA to nominate someone to the de Chastelain Commission around the same time as the institutions were established. De Chastelain might say that the appointment constituted a start to the decommissioning process, and this in turn might get Trimble off the hook. We accepted, of course, that this could not be a pre-condition and that the appointment would have to be made on a voluntary basis. A possible option here would be for either Presidents Clinton or Mbeki (South Africa) to appeal to the IRA to make such a nomination.

5. In response, Adams said that he had wanted the IRA to nominate someone to the Commission last July but had been unable to convince them to do so at the time. The situation had since become even more difficult, in particular given the public hyping of the movement in July by Sinn Féin, including the "days and weeks" dimension. However, he added encouragingly that if Sinn Féin were certain that the institutions were going to be established, then we could all use our "creative juices" to seek out a compromise.

6. We also briefed generally on Mitchell's approach, including the possibility of his putting forward his own proposals at some stage. However, before doing so, the Senator had emphasised that he would have to be pretty certain that they would take the trick. We also mentioned that one possibility at the back of the Senator's mind is that he himself might play the role of guarantor if this would help broker a solution. (We made it clear that this briefing was in the strictest confidence.)

***Legislation***

7. As expected, Adams was acerbic about the fail-safe legislation. The sense we had was that it will probably be necessary to take this off the screen in order to

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help Adams to go convincingly back to his people, many of whom, he told us, are becoming "detached" from the process. (We are working on a possible political alternative to the legislation at the moment.)

***Dumping***

8. Adams confirmed that the "dumping" element of the recent message from the Army Council (as conveyed by Fr. Alex Reid) was essentially a throw-away line. This was a "blind alley" and should not be pursued.

***Failure of Review***

9. If the Review failed, Adams emphasised that it was crucial that the two Prime Ministers should be seen shoulder to shoulder the following morning announcing that the political process, and the implementation of the relevant parts of the Agreement, were going to be actively moved forward. This was vital for the stability of the peace process.

10. In these circumstances also, the British needed to move quickly to prorogue the Assembly.

***Northern Ireland "representation" in Oireachtas***

11. The Sinn Féin team also asked abut the status of their proposal on the above, and emphasised the importance of an early, positive decision on it.

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***South Africa***

12. Finally, Adams said that Martin McGuinness was travelling to South Africa from the United States this week in response to an invitation from President Mbeki. Gerry Kelly would travel directly to join him there.

DAT.

Dermot Gallagher
17 September 1999

cc: Taoiseach, Minister, Minister O'Donnell
Mr. Teahon, Dr. Mansergh, Mr. Dalton.

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