

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Meetings with Parties, London, 2 May 2000

Steering Note

1. Our hope is that substantial progress tomorrow will enable a final push to be made later in the week. In particular, the aim is to enable Sinn Féin, on the basis of a British package on demilitarisation and other issues, to go to the IRA and obtain a statement along the lines proposed by the two Governments, together with a commitment to an early confidence-building measure. However, while discussions with Sinn Féin have been detailed, the UUP position is less fully exposed: there are encouraging signs that Trimble is eager to go for a deal, but numerous issues have yet to be teased out. The key question is whether he will feel there is enough on offer to enable him to buy into the deal.

Discussions to date

2. Over a substantial period the two Governments developed and presented to Sinn Féin (a) the text of a joint Government statement on the implementation of the Agreement; (b) what they saw as the essential core of an IRA statement, building on the leadership position of 11 February; and (c) their view of the core elements of a meaningful confidence-building measure (CBM).

3. Since Easter, the Prime Minister has had face-to-face discussions with both Trimble (last Wednesday) and Adams/McGuinness (on Saturday). There have also been a number of meetings (and telephone discussions) with the Taoiseach and Minister, and officials of both Governments have been in constant contact with Sinn Féin.

Key Issues for Sinn Féin

4. Sinn Féin say they have not yet raised with the IRA the proposed CBM, and will not do so before they have received a final version of the Governments'

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statement. The overall impression, however, is that the Governments' suggested approach is broadly within the ballpark, in the right circumstances. On the other hand, Sinn Féin seem already to have been in discussion with the IRA on the draft statement, and will have words on this available tomorrow.

5. There are five key issues for Sinn Féin, as summarised at a meeting in Belfast today (Monday 1 May):

- **demilitarisation:** while they seem to accept that the detail of what is on offer cannot be included in the Joint Statement, they wish it to be set out in the presence of the Taoiseach, who would thus in effect act as a guarantor. The Prime Minister has indicated that a "fairly dynamic package" would be available, with a geographical spread across the North, on which he could move very quickly (Jonathan Powell has tonight given Sinn Féin an aide-memoire envisaging one initial move in each of South Armagh, Derry and Belfast);

- **default:** they are eager that it be made clear that, in all circumstances, the institutions would continue to function during a Review (this is also our position; we believe it is likewise the British approach, though they don't wish to state it upfront in the text of the Governments' statement);

- **possible new schemes of decommissioning:** Sinn Féin feel that paragraph 20 of the statement should omit any reference to the current legislation, as possibly too restrictive. We gather the British are open to this;

- **Patten:** they are totally opposed to any further dilution of Patten's proposals, and would ideally like certain aspects of the Secretary of

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State's 19 January statement to be improved (eg the new oath to be required to be taken by all police and not just new recruits; four Policing Partnership Boards for Belfast, and not just one as Mandelson seemed to envisage);

– **the status of fugitive offenders ("OTRs"):** Blair said on Saturday (according to Sinn Féin) that this could be sorted out.

6. Sinn Fein emphasised at our meeting today that they needed a clear plan of action, including timing, on demilitarisation and OTRs at Tuesday's meeting if they were to approach the IRA with any hope of success.

7. In relation to the **CBM**, Sinn Féin have indicated opposition to the suggestion of a US military figure as a third party. The Prime Minister, on Saturday, mentioned Cyril Ramaphosa, the former ANC leader (now in the private sector), as an option. Sinn Féin would be happy with this. Adams and McGuinness also rejected the British view that three dumps should be verified as secure, arguing instead for one. (The advantage of having more than one dump verified is that it would allow for a reference to "dumps" to be made in a public statement in due course .) Sinn Féin have also said that the CBM could not take place immediately, but that a commitment to implementing it within a few weeks could be made early, before a UUC meeting.

Situation where Unionists reject deal

8. Overall and in broad terms, Sinn Féin are also insistent that the two Governments would, if an IRA statement in the right terms were forthcoming, make clear their commitment to the full implementation of all possible elements of the Agreement, including the North/South aspects, even if the deal were rejected by either Trimble or the UUC. The British seem to be attracted

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to this approach, but it is clearly very far from ideal.

Key Issues for the UUP

9. In general, Trimble has not been as fully briefed on what is proposed as have Sinn Féin. Thus, while he has seemed broadly interested in what is envisaged, this has not been tested in detail. Moreover, he has raised a number of issues which could present very grave difficulties. And, even if Trimble himself can be brought to sign up to the package, what would happen within the UUC could be another matter.

10. Among the matters raised by Trimble have been:

- **a timeframe:** while aware that a detailed timetable will not be on offer, Trimble continues to want some form of specific timeframe for decommissioning, though he now seems to be less insistent on this;

- **failsafe:** the UUP continue to hope that the two Governments and the SDLP would support them in applying a sanction to Sinn Féin in specified circumstances;

- **CBM:** Trimble has said that any CBM would have to be "serious" and would have to be made public before a UUC meeting.

11. Trimble also continues to lay very heavy stress on his need for some concession on **Patten**: at times this has seemed his top priority. The British agree that nothing can be done on the name or badge, but are continuing to look at other options (eg some form of continued royal family association with the Police Service of Northern Ireland, possibly through some form of honorific royal charter, and/or a general British Government decision on the

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flying of the Union Jack on Government buildings on a limited number of days each year).

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