

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Reference Code:	2023/154/59
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RECEIVED
11 JUL 2000

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10 July 2000

FOR SEC O CEALLAIGH FROM AMBASSADOR

Visit of Mr Gerry Adams to Washington

1. Mr Gerry Adams accompanied by Ms Rita O'Hare and Mr Richard McAuley made a courtesy call to the Embassy in the course of their current visit to Washington. Mr Adams had already met Mr Steinberg and had a Press Conference at the National Press Club. He is scheduled to meet Senators Kennedy and Dodd, and to address members of the House International Relations Committee before returning to New York and Ireland on Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning.

2. The press interest had been muted, with many of the regular journalists either on leave or absorbed in the Middle East agenda. The Sinn Féin President's meeting with Jim Steinberg had concentrated on Patten and OTR's. The Sinn Féin delegation denounced the way in which the British had resiled, they said, both from the Patten Report itself and from specific commitments given to them in May. They also deplored slow progress on the OTR's (where Steinberg however pointed to genuine legal and procedural issues which could not be simply dismissed).

3. During their call on me, they went over the same ground. The British had given explicit commitments on Patten last May. The detailed proposals were to have been subject to the Taoiseach's clearance as well as the British. Adams had spoken earlier in the day to Secretary Gallagher, who had made clear the Irish Government were unhappy with developments. The question was whether, aside from being unhappy,

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the government would take action to see that earlier agreements were upheld. Given the vital natural of the issue, Dublin should in many ways be more assertive on it than either Sinn Féin or the SDLP. As things were shaping up, there was no way Sinn Féin could support the proposals as meeting either the requirements of Patten or of the situation.

4. Mr Adams also touched on the slowness of response to OTR's. (I echoed Mr Steinberg's point about genuine complications in that area) and also criticised the slowness of the demilitarisation agenda. It was difficult to know whether the British Government were really pursuing the professed agenda of the Agreement, were in hock to the "securocrats" or just incorrigibly tactical in their approach. I said I thought they were genuine in their commitment on the broad level and I felt overall the deeper strategy for progress was in fact going very well, whatever about individual developments in specific areas. Mr Adams said he would be meeting Mr Jonathan Powell, with a view to a discussion on the broad line of development over the next six to twelve months, but was resigned in advance that the discussion would probably shrink to individual issues like OTR's rather than the bigger picture.

5. On individual points he was emphatic that Sinn Féin wanted a common front with the SDLP on the policing issue, and would not want to use policing tactically as a "wedge issue" in the nationalist community. In relation to Drumcree, he thought that the Adair phenomenon brought home to the wider Unionist community some realities in their own community which they might prefer to deny. I cautioned however that there would be some who would stay in denial on that dimension by viewing Adair's new prominence as just another fruit of the peace process. I commended the fact that, so far at least, nationalists had refused to be drawn into the confrontation. Adams said such confrontation would be in no one's interest (allowing that some off-licenses in the ghetto areas had been persuaded to close at certain points). Overall, the

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"humiliation" of the Unionist community was in no one's interest, least of all Sinn Féin.

6. He repeated at the end of the meeting the need for the Government to ensure that the British Government stood by its undertakings, especially on Patten, and the importance of the American dimension for that purpose.

7. He mentioned also that the peace process could have the paradoxical effect that while the upper end of the working-class community would benefit from it, the effects on the lower end of that community could be negligible or even negative. For that reason Sinn Féin were reflecting on a possible trade Mission to boost that element. I assured them the Embassy and Irish agencies would help in every way possible to publicise the merits and opportunities in these communities in the new situation.

8. They enquired about the status of the proposed Trimble Mallon visit next week. I said the proposed dates coincided with the likely climax of the Middle East negotiations (assuming they did not collapse earlier). As of today, we were told the President would definitely not be free to meet them and I anticipated therefore that Mr Trimble and Mallon would defer their visit. (I understand now this is in fact the case).

Ends

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