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Breakfast Meeting hosted by the Tánaiste for the visit of Ms. Nancy Soderberg, 6 October 8.30 a.m.

Visit to Northern Ireland

Ms. Soderberg reported that she had good meetings in Belfast, although there was some way to go overall. She met with the DUP, UUP and Minister of State Ancram. Trimble would be difficult to deal with in the short run, but perhaps easier in the longer term. He was a man to do business with. He was avoiding taking firm positions at present - they were not all thought through. She had a sense that there was some flexibility regarding the twin track approach.

She wondered whether Unionist politicians reflected the views of their community. The Tánaiste explained that the Protestant middle classes had largely withdrawn from politics, but accepted that negotiations would eventually have to take place.

Ms. Soderberg wondered whether Trimble should meet President Clinton. The Irish side felt it was for the US to decide the balance between the need to build up Trimble (and the Unionists) and perhaps to keep something in reserve for incentive purposes.

Ms. Soderberg said that the Unionists didn't have to make any sacrifice for the twin track approach, but they saw it as a "zero sum game". In talking to them, it was interesting how some issues, previously regarded as impediments (Articles 2 and 3, the position of the Catholic Church) were no longer mentioned.

DUP

Ms. Soderberg met Peter Robinson, Nigel Dodds and Ian Paisley jnr: (Ian Paisley was in Brussels). While they were very critical of the decision to give Adams a US visa, they did have a good conversation. They complained Trimble had borrowed the Assembly idea from them, although Billy Hutchinson of the PUP had claimed the same idea when she met

him. The DUP challenged the assertion that the US was even-handed. Paisley jnr. had said that they could not contemplate sharing the same room as Adams, although Peter Robinson had reminded him that there had been such an occasion in the past. However, they were staying out of the process. Regarding the Unionists she had a sense that a process was going on.

She expressed concern about the timetable and the end of year deadline. It did not seem realistic as it was now mid-October.

In reply to Ms. Soderberg, the Tánaiste said that he saw a need to nudge along SF and the British Government. He did not have a strong sense of Trimble's intentions. We needed to bring the Unionists along but they were not ready to engage. Ms. Soderberg replied that she had told them that this seemed to be "a good deal".

Commission

The terms of reference of the Commission were "pretty fuzzy" Ms. Soderberg said. The British were not going to abandon Washington Three right away, but things could change. She had never heard of the Washington criteria until a month ago. It transpired she had met with Sir Patrick Mayhew just before he expounded the idea, but it had not been raised at their meeting. More creative thinking was needed on Sinn Féin's part on constructive engagement with the Commission - they were not there yet. The Tánaiste suggested that they may need help with this; they appeared to have run out of thinking. Ms. Soderberg also mentioned that the British side wanted Sinn Féin to respond to the paper on decommissioning prepared last spring. The Irish side suggested that the dynamics of negotiation might help the arms decommissioning; it was unrealistic to expect to solve it at this point. Today's opinion poll demonstrated that people do want arms out of the equation. There was a need to develop credibility for cooperation with the Commission.

Ms. Soderberg said that the US side had suggested to Sinn Féin to "take the high road" on issues such as prisoners. The Tánaiste thought that Sinn Féin had not had the confidence to do that. Sinn Féin believed that the British had deflated much of the results of the ceasefire, claiming that their own constituents had lost confidence in the process. It was very counterproductive for them to think only in terms of the military agenda - such an argument only strengthened the hard men on the republican side.

Staffing and finance were also discussed. The Tánaiste indicated that this was not a problem from our viewpoint, since both Governments would have to pay. The State Department might in some instances pay and be reimbursed for certain expenses, to comply with US regulations.

S/Sec O hUiginn suggested that staffing should be regarded as a matter for the Commission. The terms of reference had to be negotiated and examined politically. The key issue was to build up trust. The removal of arms was a delicate question; the Commission might not go into technical aspects in the first instance. The dynamics needed to develop. The Commission would be wise not to be too prescriptive. There was an unassailable logic that British military apparatus should reduce in step with the development of the peace. The Hume/Ancram "non-paper" examined this.

Membership of Commission

Ms. Soderberg thought it would be worthwhile to do further work on the question of membership - it needed to be "ready to go". Sinn Féin were very nervous, in her opinion, as to who would be on the Commission. The Tánaiste said that our side had not pursued Senator Mitchell recently until we knew whether Sinn Féin was going to engage - we needed that indication. We were looking at a total of three members - perhaps the others might come from South Africa and Finland? S/Sec. O hUiginn added that the US system had a very good outreach in this regard. South Africa had a positive image for the Nationalists, while many Unionists looked to Canada.

Ms. Soderberg remarked that Adams liked to point out that the ANC had not decommissioned its weapons in South Africa. Canada and a Scandinavian country were possibilities. Senator Mitchell's own time constraints had to be considered. The British saw Mitchell as a pro nationalist member. The Irish side rejected this.

Ms. Soderberg agreed that they would do further work on this - she added that it would be very awkward and could set things back, if information leaked.

Prisoners

Ms. Soderberg asked whether the US side could do anything on this issue. The Tánaiste outlined the background to worsening conditions of prisoners and a hardening of the British position, including the role of the Home Secretary, Michael Howard. He urged the US to give a clear signal to the British that they wanted the transfer issue disposed of before the visit. (He referred to cross border roads as an example of another issue which had dragged out over time). S/Sec O hUiginn explained that the NIO had developed a much better understanding of the theology of prisoners' concerns. There was no such "cultural" understanding in Britain and the situation was complicated by internal Tory politics.

Installations

The Tánaiste referred to Rosemount in Derry. The structure aroused hostility and should be removed.

Visit of President Clinton

Security of President Clinton in N.I.

Ms. Soderberg raised the question of RUC protection of the President - the RUC presence around him would be considerable. The Tánaiste said that it was possible to have reasonably discreet security rather than blatant displays of force. The public image, including that portrayed by the US media, needed to be taken into account.

Programme in N.I.

Ms. Soderberg outlined the tentative programme which was being considered. She said that the US side would welcome our views in this regard. The main elements were:

- a) visit/speech at the Mackie Plant;
- b) a visit to the peace line;
- c) Derry;
- d) the need for a balancing engagement in East Belfast;
- e) the question of the President spending a night in Belfast.

Regarding the Mackie Plant, Mr. Scannell explained the background to the Company, which formerly had a 100% Protestant workforce. It was as neutral a location as could be identified in Belfast and the physical layout of the plant was suitable for a large number of people. Ms. Soderberg added that a large number of businessmen would be accompanying the President. The US side would welcome any other ideas, since they would like to "leave something lasting behind". Other possible ideas discussed included a "Clinton Peace Library" at the proposed Springvale campus; the Linen Hall Library; the Ulster Folk Museum and a visit to the home of former President Andrew Jackson.

Ms Soderberg asked whether it was essential that President Clinton stay overnight in Belfast. The Irish side indicated that this should not be of vital importance either way - logistical requirements should determine this decision. Ms. Soderberg said she had a "strong sense" that the British side would be unhappy if President Clinton did not stay in N.I. They were "dancing around" the question of whether the President would be accompanied by PM Major during the visit; she was aware that it was Budget week in Britain. Ambassador Kennedy Smith thought that it would be "a plus" if the Prime Minister did accompany the President. Ms. Soderberg agreed, adding that the two men had a good relationship.

Visit to Ireland

Ms. Soderberg understood that the programme was "in pretty good shape", although she needed to meet the advance team when she returned to Washington. Mr. Scannell outlined the set piece occasions already in the programme, in addition to other elements such as a "crowd scene" in Dublin City Centre. Ms. Soderberg also referred to a speech to be given at TCD. She pointed out that there would not be an opportunity for a major foreign policy speech in Ireland (following the speeches in London and Belfast). She referred also to the President's address to Parliament at Westminster. (Note: it is thought the venue will be a committee room). S/Sec O hUiginn suggested that the address to the Oireachtas might contain two main elements: a focus on the Irish relationship and the American contribution to the peace process. The Irish side stressed the need for a substantive dimension to the President's programme, which would find a natural focus in the Oireachtas.

The President will meet Opposition leaders in Dublin as is customary in his programmes abroad.

Regarding the dinner at Dublin Castle, Ms. Soderberg mentioned that there was a large number on the US side. The Tánaiste explained our practice in compiling official guest lists, including visitors. Ms. Soderberg said figures on their side were not exact yet. Secretary of State Brown would bring perhaps 50 people; the number from Congress was uncertain (10-40). In addition, Irish-Americans members from the Cabinet would be keen to travel e.g. Education Secretary Richard Riley, Carol Browner EPA Director. The Tánaiste assured Ms. Soderberg we would try to plan occasions to take account of their requirements. The possibility of an additional reception on the same evening was also discussed (in order to cater for the large numbers).

Ms. Soderberg noted that there was ongoing work on certain MOU's e.g. science and technology, the Marine and the Radius project. She wondered about parliamentary links. The

Tánaiste said this would be primarily a matter for the Ceann

Comhairle, but in his view the more the interchange that took place the better. It was agreed that the areas of education, tourism and computer technology should be examined further. Ambassador Kennedy-Smith suggested that Bill Gates might return for the visit.

Outside Dublin

Ms. Soderberg emphasised that the President would like a relaxed, informal evening for the return dinner at Dromoland. Ambassador Kennedy Smith mentioned the idea of a peace concert, possibly including children from the two communities and Phil Coulter whom the President liked very much. Perhaps Seamus Heaney could be invited too. The margins of the dinner could be used for this.

Golf

The President would play golf in almost any weather conditions and was totally committed to playing.

Mrs. Hilary Rodham Clinton

Ms. Soderberg confirmed that Mrs. Clinton will travel and she expected her to undertake a full, separate and substantive programme. It was likely that their daughter Chelsea would travel also. Usually a member of the First Lady's staff made an advance visit to organise her programme.

Conclusion

Ms. Soderberg said that the President was very excited about his trip to Ireland. She would like to build up the substantive part of the programme, including preparations for the Press Conference with the Taoiseach, speeches and items to be announced.

Orla O'Hanrahan
Orla O'Hanrahan
First Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
6 October, 1995

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