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Visit by the Taoiseach and Mrs Bruton to Washington  
March 1996

OVERVIEW

A. Key Points

1. The Taoiseach will have an opportunity to bring the President up-to-date on the latest developments in the peace process, and to express appreciation for the continuing high level of interest which the President and his advisers have maintained over recent weeks.
2. The President will wish to have our assessment of the prospects for the re-establishment of the ceasefire, including the part to be played by Sinn Fein in bringing that about.
3. Having played a valuable role in facilitating agreement on a fixed date for the commencement of talks, the Administration will be interested in our view on the results of the present intensive round of consultations, and on the likely next steps in the process.
4. The Taoiseach will wish to reiterate our appreciation of the efforts of Senator Mitchell and his colleagues, and to welcome the continuing interest in the issue by US public figures.
5. The Taoiseach will be aware that the President is being presented with the Irish-America Magazine Irish-American of the Year Award on Monday evening (11 March). Mrs Clinton was guest speaker at the annual Project Children dinner (brings young people from both communities to the U.S. during the summer months) on 7th March.

6. There will also be an opportunity to convey to the Speaker and to our friends in Congress of both parties our gratitude for the consistent, and strongly bipartisan, support which they have extended to the peace process. We welcomed the recent positive statement of Senator Dole on the process (see para 8 below).

**B. Background**

1. Since the breakdown of the ceasefire, the Administration, led by National Security Adviser Tony Lake, have worked actively to have it restored. They have made it clear that they intend to remain engaged in the process, and have maintained contact with a wide range of leading figures from both communities.
2. The White House have fully shared our view that agreement on a fixed date for all-party talks was essential to breaking the impasse. Lake worked closely with us prior to the recent summit, and intervened effectively with the British to facilitate agreement on a date, and to keep conditions to a minimum. Following the summit he was in touch with us to convey on the President's behalf congratulations to the Taoiseach, and to all who had contributed to what the White House regarded as a highly satisfactory outcome.
3. They will wish to be briefed on progress during the present round of intensive inter-party consultations, and to have our views on the issues - including elections, referenda and the arrangements for talks - on which early decisions are expected from the two Governments. There will be an opportunity to identify issues where US involvement could be particularly welcome.

**Sinn Féin Leader**

4. The US decision to grant a visa to Gerry Adams (while withholding an invitation to the White House) has been generally welcomed by Irish-American political leaders. Prior to the visa being granted, Adams confirmed to the White House that he would not engage in fund-raising during the trip.
5. While there has been some criticism of the visa decision from right-wing circles (e.g. the Washington Times), it has been fairly low-key, and has usually reflected an inherent anti-Clinton agenda. When questioned on the issue, Tony Lake has justified the decision on the basis that the original visit was very helpful to the peace process and, secondly, that he wants the Sinn Féin leader to hear at first hand the strength of feeling within Irish-America on the need to re-establish the ceasefire. We understand that while no decision has yet been communicated to Adams, a meeting with Lake, off Government property, during his visit remains a distinct possibility.
6. We understand that Adams, who arrives in New York on 12 March, expects to be in Washington on 14/15 March and to attend events in Scranton, Pennsylvania on 16/17 March. We are aware that, at the request of the local SF office, Congressman Gilman has arranged a meeting with leading figures of the Friends/Ad Hoc groups on the afternoon of 14 March (SF apparently indicated that Adams was not seeking to be invited to the Speaker's Lunch - which was not going to happen in any event). We have been in touch separately with the Department regarding Adams' possible presence at the American Ireland Fund Dinner.

**Presidential Politics**

7. The Administration, in an election year, has clearly a more than usual interest

in the success of a process with which the President has been strongly identified. In recent months both the President and the Secretary of State have pointed to Northern Ireland as an example of the Administration's effectiveness in the foreign policy area. We know from our Democratic Party contacts of their anxiety at recent developments, and their wish to see the process back on track.

8. In a recent helpful statement, the likely Republican nominee Senator Bob Dole confirmed his support for the peace process, urged Sinn Fein to support an immediate restoration of the ceasefire and, significantly, said that "the pursuit of peace in Northern Ireland must remain an important foreign policy priority". He was quoted recently in the New York media as expressing the view that a visa should not have been issued to Adams in advance of the renewal of the ceasefire.

C. Other Issues

1. International Fund for Ireland (IFI)

Congress maintained US support for the IFI for Fiscal Year 1996 at the previous year's figure of \$19.6m. This was a considerable achievement at a time of widespread budget cutting, particularly in a context of increased hostility to foreign aid (Israel and Egypt were the only other recipients to escape cutbacks).

Earlier this month the House/Senate Conference dealing with the foreign aid authorization bill (as distinct from the appropriations bills which give budgetary authority for the expenditure of funds) recommended that the aid be maintained at its present level for FY 1997. The bill also includes compromise language on the application of the McBride Principles to Fund

projects, a step strongly advocated by Ben Gilman, Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, but opposed by Senator Helms. The end result is that the Bill strongly commends the principles, without making them mandatory. Irish-American supporters of McBride have chosen to interpret the outcome as a significant advance, although the legislation, if enacted, is likely to have little impact in practice.

Given the sensitivity of the McBride issue for many Irish-Americans, it would seem best simply to say that we respect the decision of Congress in this area. It might also be pointed out that the Fund, as a matter of policy, requires all recipients to confirm that assisted projects will be operated in full conformity with the principles of fair employment.

While it may be possible to secure US assistance for a further year, there is no doubt that many of the Fund's supporters on the Hill increasingly look to strengthened trade and investment links, rather than aid, as the kernel of US support. We would share this view, though we would wish to see grant aid continue in 1997.

## 2. Immigration

The Senate Judiciary Committee has recently begun consideration of the Immigration Reform Bill, which seeks to limit substantially the number of legal immigrants, as well as tackling the problem of illegal immigration. Our principal objective is to secure the retention of the Diversity Programme, at present excluded from the Bill, which with some 2,000 visas per year is the main vehicle for Irish immigrants to this country. We were previously successful on the House side in securing support for an amendment to maintain this programme.

Senator Kennedy intends to introduce an amendment to retain a modified form of the Diversity Programme, and we have been active (as was the Tanaiste during his recent visit) in encouraging support among other members of the Judiciary Committee for this.

3. **Visa Waiver**

Following a decision by Congress, on the initiative of the Embassy, the Administration last year introduced a Visa Waiver scheme, the effect of which was (uniquely) to add Ireland to the list of countries eligible for the programme; this allows tourist and business people to travel to the U.S. for up to 90 days without a visa. After almost a year of operation, the scheme has proved itself a boon to business and holiday travelers. Its benefits are likely to be highlighted again during the coming holiday season, when events such as the Atlanta Olympics (19 July-4 August) will bring a substantial number of Irish visitors to the US.

4. **Ambassador Kennedy-Smith**

Press reports in recent days have drawn attention to the internal State Department procedures initiated following complaints against the Ambassador by members of the Embassy staff. The Ambassador was judged to have dealt inappropriately with these officers following their recourse to the "dissent channel", which they used to make known their disagreement with her handling of a range of issues, including the Adams visa and the Visa Waiver Programme. There is clearly some settling of scores involved, including by Senator Jesse Helms, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, an old foe of Senator Ted Kennedy. If the issue is raised, the Taoiseach might simply say that it would be inappropriate for him to comment, while adding that we consider the Ambassador to be an excellent representative of the United States in Ireland.

5. **Follow-up to the White House Trade and Investment Conference**

The White House has signaled its support for a follow-up conference to the White House Conference on Trade and Investment held in Washington last May, and a formal announcement is expected shortly. It is proposed that the Conference would on this occasion be a Department of Commerce rather than a White House event. It would take place in September 1996 in either Philadelphia or Pittsburgh. The timing of the Conference reflects a desire in the White House for a series of Irish-related events between now and the Presidential elections in November, starting with the Taoiseach's visit, and followed by the State Visit in June and the Conference in September.

6. **Application by Aer Lingus/Delta for code-sharing authority**

Aer Lingus and Delta Airlines have reached agreement on a blocked space and code-sharing arrangements. Under the agreement, Delta will purchase seats on Aer Lingus daily services to and from New York, and US and Irish travelers will also enjoy greater access to the network of US cities served by Delta. The agreement is currently awaiting approval by the US Department of Transportation; it has, however, been opposed by some of the other U.S. airlines (American Airlines, United). In view of US support for increased investment in Ireland as a means of underpinning the peace process, and of the importance of access/direct links for tourism and trade, we would hope that the proposal would be welcomed and supported by the US authorities.

7. **Friends of Ireland/Ad Hoc Group**

The Ad Hoc Committee now comprises four Co-Chairmen - two Republicans and two Democrats, viz Congressmen Gilman, King, Manton and Neal, respectively. Serious consideration was given last year to amalgamating this

group and the Friends of Ireland (chaired by the Republican Congressman, Jim Walsh), but the Speaker decided that the Friends should remain separate, at least for the moment. The idea of a single Irish-American group on the Hill has some obvious attractions, although there are times when the more assertive voice of the Ad Hoc Committee can serve a purpose.

For our part, the Friends remain the pre-eminent group on Ireland in the Congress. It has, very importantly, the blessing of the Speaker, and also, unlike the Ad Hoc Committee, a link into the Senate through the membership of several Senators, in particular Senator Kennedy. We have, at the same time, worked very assiduously to create what has now become a warm and close working relationship with the Ad Hoc Committee. The strong position of the Ad Hoc leaders in support of the restoration of the ceasefire, which they have communicated forcefully in private contacts with Sinn Fein, is an important additional point of pressure at this critical time.

Irish Embassy  
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