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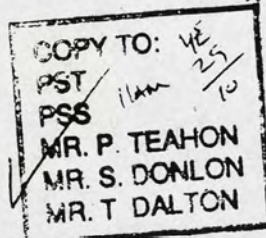
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**Confidential**

27 October 1996



**CONVERSATIONS WITH LAKE AND SODERBERG RE POSSIBLE  
 RENEWAL OF CEASEFIRE**

Dear Secretary

**Lake:**

1. When I met the National Security Adviser, Tony Lake, on Thursday evening, he was unhappy about the public emphasis placed by the British Prime Minister in the Commons on Wednesday on the need for Sinn Féin to prove the bona fides of the ~~X~~ ceasefire over a period before they could join the talks. Lake felt that this would make it more difficult to achieve a compromise between the British and Sinn Féin positions.
  
2. When we both subsequently ran into the Minister at the British Embassy, Lake conveyed his unhappiness directly about the development. (It also emerged in the conversation that he thought (wrongly) that the Prime Minister had publicly referred to the British requirement of a three month penalty period in his statement).

**Soderberg:**

3. I again discussed the present situation in relation to a possible renewal of the IRA ceasefire with Nancy Soderberg yesterday (Saturday). She said that the White House is receiving the clear message that Sinn Féin are insisting on joining the talks pretty

well immediately. The reality, however, was that "they have to pay a price" after Lisburn. The question was how to finesse this price in order to ensure that the present initiative didn't "blow up".

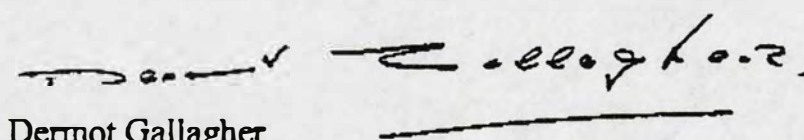
4. Soderberg's own personal view is that three months is not an unreasonable period. However, she went on to emphasise that personal views were irrelevant, and she agreed completely with me that three months simply wouldn't do the trick. What was critical, she added, was not what we thought but what would do the trick. This gave me the opportunity to set out our thinking in some detail, along the lines of the Tánaiste's Wednesday text.
5. Soderberg went on to say that the White House would do everything possible to encourage a formula that would bridge the gap. In the first instance, however, it was essential that the two governments talk together and try to find a common ground. She knew that was happening almost as we spoke. One possible way forward that occurred to her was to allow the talks to continue for say six weeks, and then adjourn for the Christmas holiday period. In other words, if the holiday period were factored in intelligently, we just might be able to get everyone off the hook.
6. In the course of the discussion, I emphasised on several occasions the critical role that Washington could play in urging the British to move off their present fixed position. The White House carried enormous influence and credibility with the two key players, Downing Street and Adams, and could be our best hope of bringing off the huge prize of a renewed ceasefire. Soderberg again agreed that they were prepared to help to the maximum with the British and with Adams, but only after we had



completed our present efforts to work out a common position with the British.

7. Soderberg likewise agreed that Washington would do everything possible to manage creatively any interim period that was agreed before Sinn Féin was allowed to join the talks. They would, for instance, welcome and meet Adams, and presumed we and the British would do the same. She agreed that a possible role for George Mitchell could also be looked at, but this would need to be considered very carefully.
8. All in all, it was a helpful discussion. It was particularly welcome and reassuring also given that, as the President is simply running out the clock on an easy victory on the 5th November, there is no pressure on the NSC to try and deliver a ceasefire before that date.

Yours sincerely

  
Dermot Gallagher  
Ambassador

Seán Ó hUiginn Uas  
Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs