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From: PS/Secretary of State (B) cc
22 February 1993

- PS/SofS (B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Mates (DFP, B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Atkins (DED, DOE&L) - B
- PS/Mr Hanley (DENI, B&L) - B
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Ledlie - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Steele - B
- Mr Wood (B&L) - B
- Mr D J R Hill - B
- Mr Cooke - B
- Mr Stephens - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Brooker, SIL - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr Archer, RID - B
- Mr Pellew, NAD
- Mr Caine

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1. Mr McNeill
MB
2. Mr Quinn
29 FEB 1993
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Jonathan Margetts, SIL - B

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR SEITZ - 19 FEBRUARY 1993

The Secretary of State was very grateful for the briefing which you provided for his meeting with the US Ambassador to London, Mr Ray Seitz. They met at Hillsborough Castle for about 1/2 an hour on 19 February, prior to the Institute of Directors Annual Dinner, at which the Ambassador was the guest speaker. I was also present. The two main subjects discussed were the proposed US envoy and the state of the talks process. On the former, the Ambassador said he expected any initiative to be purely a fact-finding mission, led by Tom Foley. On the latter, the Secretary of State said that the local elections in May were already getting in the way of the process and it was therefore increasingly difficult to make much progress in this interim period.

Peace Envoy

2. The Ambassador diplomatically described how the new President had encountered a number of setbacks following his election. He had

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been criticised, rightly or wrongly, for having done u-turns on campaign promises and now needed to salvage something from his pre-election campaign. With 40 million Irish Americans, this seemed like a good issue to choose. The other consideration was that the President desperately needed to get off on a good footing with the British Government and so the forthcoming summit with the Prime Minister was regarded as very important indeed.

3. The Ambassador reported on his meeting with the Prime Minister the previous day and said that he detected some unease from Mr Major about the question of an envoy. The Ambassador said both administrations were keen to ensure that it should not either dominate or get in the way of their first meeting. He did not know the Clinton administration team that well but said that the relevant foreign affairs officials in Washington were both sensible and steady and would be advocating a look and listen role for the emissary. [In his speech to the IOD later in the evening Mr Seitz said he expected the President to appoint "an individual sensitive to the complexities and nuances of politics in the Province, someone who could gather the facts as they stand and report the situation directly to him and to the Congress".]

4. The Ambassador said that he regarded this more as an expression of interest and support and a legitimate demonstration of concern for the Province and its people. It was also an opportunity to set in context the realities of Northern Ireland, as he personally knew them very well. He said that Tom Foley was currently in the frame to do the job and he (Seitz) did not expect it to be a continuing role. The Secretary of State in response said that he had no difficulty with either the principle of someone coming to find out the facts and realities of the situation here and report back, or with the choice of Tom Foley. He referred to his and the Prime Minister's comments on the subject earlier in the week. It was agreed that nothing further should be said about the identity of the envoy until after the summit.

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The Talks Process

5. The Secretary of State gave the Ambassador a reasonably detailed and candid account of the talks process. It had been constructive and very useful in dispelling some of the myths and prejudices which existed between the parties. It was true, however, that everyone was looking over their shoulder - the UUP to the DUP and the DUP to the more extreme loyalists; the SDLP to Sinn Fein and Alliance to some extent to the local Conservatives. Parties were already taking positions in relation to the local elections in May and it now looked as though it might be difficult to do much substantive business before then. He recounted that in a conversation with Mr Molyneaux a few days previously, the latter had shown a predictable reticence to getting into any more high wire acts.

6. The Secretary of State said that the three stranded process had served the talks well but he was a little concerned at whether the 'nothing agreed until everything agreed' principle over the three strands was actually attainable with the present crop of parties and party leaders. He had found that people in the streets wanted politicians to talk but the politicians had shown a clear reluctance to do so except on their own terms. What they would prefer was if HMG were to produce a blueprint and then they could all join forces in either boycotting or criticising it. The role of perpetual opposition and the cushion of direct rule to take all the decisions did actually suit a lot of people, including politicians, in the Province.

7. On Anglo-Irish relations, the Secretary of State said that the AIA was very useful, particularly in aiding cross-border security co-operation. The new team in Dublin were beginning to settle in and he reported on his first meetings with Mr Spring as being both positive and businesslike. The Secretary of State said he was slightly disappointed that Mr Spring had not followed up his early signal of intent to meet Unionist leaders by actually making contact rather more quickly. According to Mr Molyneaux the approach had only come during the course of the past week and then in a less than direct way.

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8. The Secretary of State said he thought this was to some extent a missed opportunity. He recounted the views of Archbishop Eames to the Opsahl Commission earlier in the week about the need to avoid grand designs, added to similar views which he had also heard from Mr Molyneaux. He said he would be looking at other ways of involving local politicians including cross border schemes (like transport, tourism) and he felt sure that progress could be made after the local government elections.

Conclusion

9. Shortage of time precluded mention of any of the other topics covered in the briefing (MacBride, Visa for Gerry Adams) and the meeting was pleasant and friendly throughout. The Ambassador expressed his support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the three-stranded talks process and the IFI. Whether he continued in office or not, he hoped to maintain an interest in the Province.

Signed

W K LINDSAY
Private Secretary

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