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BRITISH SECRETARY
28 OCTOBER 1998

ASST TS: 514110
SEC 29 OCT 1998
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Mr McHugh
Mr Jeffrey
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cc: See Distribution List

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L)

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH MR ANDREWS - THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER:
IRISH VIEWS

Summary

Irish agree tomorrow's meeting is timely, and will concentrate on North/South issues as discussed yesterday with FM/DFM. The Irish remain coy about their preferred six implementation bodies, but signs of agreement on four. In the light of tomorrow's meeting, the Irish hope we can 'pre-cook' Monday's (possible) meeting. (On this the Irish may be optimistic). Plans are in hand, as for an IGC, for a meeting in Block B, Castle Buildings on Monday.

Aim of note

2. Suggested objectives for tomorrow's meeting have already been put forward by Bill Jeffrey. This note, serves as 'Irish' background.

Agenda

3. The Irish expect a meeting in Iveagh House beginning at 1400 hours tomorrow, lasting around one hour - a little longer, if necessary. The Irish tend to overload agendas on such occasions, but we cannot avoid reference to issues of wider current interest beyond the North/South matters which the Irish accept are the main issues for discussion. So the following topics are likely to feature:

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- Implementation of the Agreement (including progress of the Bill;
- 'confidence measures'; and
- **North/South matters.**

Comment

4. Item 1 (Implementation) is self-explanatory. **Confidence measures** embrace, from an Irish point of view, 'normalisation/demilitarisation': Fort Whiterock and our 'Security Policy Strategy' paper. On the former, the proposed closure will be welcomed, but the Secretary of State is likely to be pressed, again, for more movement. On the Strategy Paper, she may be told that the draft passed to the Irish on Monday, is 'much better' than any of its predecessors; but the Irish hope to have their detailed comments by Monday (they have been preoccupied with other business); and may express the (reasonable) hope they will be consulted on the timing of publication.

5. As is normal with the Irish, confidence is only seen as operating in one direction (and they may need reminding about **prisoner releases**). The ultimate confidence building measure currently - and not on the agenda - is **decommissioning**. Since the present flurry of meetings is designed to make rapid progress in the absence of progress on decommissioning, the Secretary of State may not want to dwell on this issue. However, she may see advantage in mentioning the Taoiseach's recent remarks in the Dáil (according to Dr Mansergh, reflecting his own views - not an official script) that '**Trimble has less room to manoeuvre than Sinn Féin**'. It is one out of which capital might usefully be made. There may or may not be the possibility of any movement in 1999 to actual decommissioning (see John Holmes' letter of 25 October to you); but that does not prevent the IRA from accepting, even now, that they are committed to decommissioning in principle. Meanwhile, the way in which Sinn Féin and IRA spokesmen are apparently going out of their way to tell 'Protestant intellectuals' (Des Rea, Paul Bew) that they will 'never' decommission, and that this was understood when the Agreement was signed, is deeply unhelpful (and she should say so). It hardly helps General de Chastelain (who is aware of these overtures) either.

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North/South

6. There is a shared understanding, from sources on both sides, of yesterday's meeting between the Secretary of State and the FM/DFM. But the Secretary of State will want to ask Mr Andrews **how he now sees the situation?** It is likely that **both our Ministers will want to tease out in some detail where do we go from here** (and no doubt in the light of what has emerged from the first half of Thursday's meeting in Belfast). In briefing Donoghue, I have laid emphasis on;

- Trimble's desire to make progress (on even more than 6 + 6 if they are reasonable);
- his frustration that the Irish have not shown their hand; but also,
- our understanding, based on exchanges in Austria, that the Irish 'would not set the bar too high';
- the cast list for the Monday meeting is problematic (especially for Trimble so far as Sinn Féin is concerned - this needs addressing tomorrow); and
- while the British Government will be as helpful as possible, and is encouraging Trimble to make rapid progress, it was not ultimately for HMG to determine, either with the Irish Government or the FM, what the bodies/areas for co-operation should be.

7. Donoghue's response was, broadly, reassuring, even though the Irish clearly still hope to convert our willingness to 'help' into putting an armlock on Trimble. On the other hand, there was no need to fear that the Irish were asking for the moon.

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8. Their current understanding, partly based on reports from a dinner with Gerry Loughran and Tony McCusker at Maryfield last night (see both Rosalie Flanagan's notes of today's date), is that the Unionists might go for the following 6 bodies:

- Tourism;
- Inland Fisheries;
- Inland waterways;
- Irish language
- Environmental protection;
- Strategic transport planning.

The Irish wished the following 4 also to be taken into consideration:

- EU programmes;
- Agricultural research;
- Trade promotion; and
- Training and employment.

Given what Tony McCusker also thinks we know about current SDLP preferences, it might not be unreasonable - subject to Sinn Féin hesitations (see below) - to aim to sign off on at least the following 4 on Monday:

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- Tourism;
- Transport strategy;
- Inland waterways;
- Irish language.

This would lead to debate on the extra 2 centering on the following 3:

- an additional economic topic (trade promotion?);
- agricultural topic (research?);
- EU programmes.

Comment

9. Last night's Maryfield encounter gave the Irish some grounds for optimism in the economic sphere (DED foresaw no significant technical problems) but the Irish have doubts whether a Trade Promotion etc body might have sufficient credibility: for instance, so far as overseas trade promotion was concerned, Northern Irish exporters were likely to continue to gravitate to overseas trade promotional facilities offered by the wider UK system (which was more developed than anything in Ireland).

10. Donoghue was coy about what the current Irish 'wish list' was, but clearly bodies on Tourism and Irish Language figured in it. This partly reflects **Sinn Féin's unhappiness** at not being in the Executive (or North/South Ministerial Council) by 31 October, and only present tomorrow as one of the parties (with their position on Monday uncertain). They may accordingly not acquiesce too readily in the kind of 'deal' hinted at above. The Secretary of State may wish to **press Mr Andrews hard as to what the Irish want**, which they may not know themselves until their own last minute consultations - now in hand - with the SDLP and

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Sinn Féin. The Irish ambition remains, in the light of tomorrow's meetings, to 'pre-cook' a meeting for Monday. I have warned Donoghue that he may be over-optimistic in characteristically expecting too much of our influence on D Trimble.

Monday's meeting

11. The cast list for Monday, if it happens, is a matter of sensitivity for Trimble (can he sit down with Sinn Féin?). No doubt the **Secretary of State will want to do everything to reassure Mr Andrews, and persuade Mr Trimble that his answer is 'yes'**. As for Irish representation, I gather it is possible that the Taoiseach may himself wish to attend - at all events the Irish system is giving him the opportunity. This is not, however, necessarily, a compelling argument for the Prime Minister's attendance: the heart of the deal on North/South bodies is between the Irish Government and the NI authorities, not HMG. So, quite apart from saving his intervention for possible better effect later, there may be presentational advantage in staying away. This seems, however, a matter for political judgement.

12. Together with David Hill, the Secretariat is making arrangements for a contingency meeting in Castle Buildings on Monday.

Signed:

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