

Mr. McAuley

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PA Poney  
Review file (LATEST volume)

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FROM: PS/PUS  
20 NOVEMBER 1992

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W. T. G. G. G.  
paras b & c are interesting.  
26/11

- cc. PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Alston - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Loughran - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Archer, RID, FCO - B

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

*[Handwritten signature]*

MEETING WITH SIR ROBIN RENWICK, HMA WASHINGTON: 19 NOVEMBER 1992

Sir Robin Renwick, HM Ambassador in Washington, came to meet the PUS and other officials to discuss the implications for Northern Ireland of the new Clinton Administration in the United States. Accompanying Sir Robin were Graham Archer and Mark Pellew, and also present were Messrs Fell, Thomas, Loughran, Alston, Bell, Watkins, Brooker and myself.

2. The meeting began with courtesies. The Ambassador wished to put on the record his gratefulness for the effective support he received from the NIO on Northern Ireland matters. The teamwork between the Embassy, the NIO and the Foreign Office in London were extremely good. The PUS thanked Sir Robin and concurred with the sentiments expressed.

Political Development

3. The Ambassador was then given a short briefing on the prospects for political development following the ending of the recent round of Talks. It was clear that a remarkably soft landing, barely registering on the Richter Scale, had been achieved - there had been no DUP picket at the IGC in Dublin (unlike 1991), reaction in the House to the Secretary of State's Statement had been positive, and the Joint Statement agreed at the end of the Talks committed participants to the desirability of further Talks and bilateral consultations to achieve them. It would not be correct theologically to describe what we were seeking as a resumption of the Talks, but there was a very good chance of a new round which might build on the particularly useful format of the final stages of the previous one. Unionists would certainly wish to expose some key conditions, especially seeking a more forward statement from the Irish Government on Articles 2 and 3, and HMG might need to drive the process to focus the discussion.

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JEN/L/11/59/37771

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4. In Northern Ireland there were no signs of a lessening of popular enthusiasm for Talks, but the need to find ways of helping the DUP in particular, and the SDLP to the table again would have to be addressed. The Irish Government were almost certainly the key, and the results of their General Election would be most important. Timing remained slightly problematic with the precise role of the May 1993 Local Government Elections in Northern Ireland being open to some debate. In summary, there were difficulties in predicting when a new round of Talks might begin, but the Joint Statement was very helpful and gave grounds for public bullishness about future prospects. The Ambassador said that so long as there were signs of a continuing process holding a promise of an agreement it would be easier to hold US activism, including that of a new Administration.

The US Scene

5. Sir Robin Renwick reported on some of his contacts with senior figures on the US political scene and confirmed his advice that the Prime Minister should say something about Northern Ireland when he met President-Elect Clinton (probably in mid-December). There would be no need to engage Clinton in a detailed dialogue, for example on matters raised in his campaign letter, but if nothing was said we would gain nothing and might even find negative consequences. The PUS said that Ambassador Seitz's advice that Northern Ireland should not be raised had been a little surprising, but Sir Robin felt that Seitz may simply have been anxious to avoid a detailed and dramatic response to the Clinton letter.

MacBride

6. Sir Robin said that the Embassy had been conducting a reasonably successful rearguard action against the MacBride Principles based on two propositions - opposition to legislation (Governor Wilson's veto in California), and the adoption of planned legislation representing no real threat to companies wishing to invest in Northern Ireland (New York). The PUS confirmed that we had been reconsidering the position on MacBride but that it was difficult to see shifts which might be both safe and sure. Mr Fell said that some options were being explored, including the bold notion of undercutting MacBride with a new set of Principles under a new name. Mr Loughran added that the problem in the United States seemed to be that many of our natural allies would not come forward to support us on MacBride and a new set of Principles might be able to enlist precisely those people without HMG obviously changing course and leaving people who had supported us against MacBride in the lurch. Sir Robin agreed that it was the hassle factor rather than the Principles themselves which were the problem and that a new set of Principles would need a name such as John Hume's attached to them in order to take the trick.

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Visits

7. There was some discussion about the best timing for a visit by the Secretary of State to the United States and the Ambassador suggested that around Easter would be a good time providing there was still some life in the political process. Given that, a visit then would be very useful. The earliest date at which the new Administration would feel obliged to say something about Northern Ireland would be for the St Patrick's Day Statement, and the Irish would almost certainly wish to have their Foreign Minister visit the United States for March 17th. It was hoped that Mr Hurd would have been to Washington before that, but the Ambassador also felt that there might be usefulness in a visit by the PUS or Mr Fell in late February.

Christmas Tree Bill

8. The Ambassador commented that he thought this was an appalling idea which should not be encouraged.

9. Summarising, Sir Robin said [REDACTED] the case HMG had made over the past ten years had got across and sympathy for Irish terrorism had declined in the United States to our general advantage.

Signed:

TONY BEETON  
PRIVATE SECRETARY  
20 NOVEMBER 1992

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