



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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13 October, 1994

Confidential

Mr Sean O hUiginn
Assistant Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
Dept of Foreign Affairs
Dublin 2

Dear Assistant Secretary

Val Martinez

Val Martinez, the US Consul General in Belfast, came to lunch in the Secretariat yesterday. Martinez' rank in the US system is low, as he himself ruefully pointed out, and his contacts in Washington are limited to the State Department. He was highly conscious of our contacts on Capitol Hill and in the White House. Nonetheless, we found him a thoughtful, well informed and well disposed man. He plays a role in contacts between the parties here and the administration and he has recently been publicly designated, with the Embassy in Dublin, as a contact with Sinn Fein. He has been in Belfast for just over a year and is certainly an improvement on his predecessor, Doug Archard, now US Ambassador in Turkmenistan, in so far as attitude to the Nationalist community is concerned. He demonstrates awareness of the potential pitfalls in connection with his role in issuing visas to Gerry Adams et al.

The Joint Secretary spent some time explaining our views on the present situation. We found him receptive.

General

Martinez is in his mid-forties and comes from South Indiana. His grandfather emigrated from Spain. He is Ivy League, Princeton, with an academic background, having lectured in history prior to joining the US Foreign Service. He has recently married his first wife, for a second time. In the early 1980's he was human rights officer at the US Embassy in Guatemala and served subsequently in Nicaragua. Last year, given the option of joining the National Security Council, he opted for the post of Consul General in Belfast instead.

Contacts with Sinn Fein

Martinez has had several meetings with Gerry Adams and other Sinn Fein personalities. He admitted to some form of contact even before it was officially sanctioned. He observed that it was just as well he knew how to contact Sinn Fein since he had received instructions to deliver personally Tony Lake's letter to Gerry Adams! He referred at several points to his contacts among the clergy in West Belfast, mentioning Des Wilson by name, among others. His meetings with Adams have, not surprisingly, centred on Adams' applications for visas to enter the US. In this connection, he referred quite heatedly to the invidious position in which he was placed as a consequence of the instant leaking to Conor O Clery in Washington from the NSC of developments in the Adams' visa saga. He referred in particular to a story which appeared in the Irish Times on September 20th which had stated that Adams would be given a visa without conditions. He was constrained by his official instructions not only to delay issuing the visa until 23 September, but also to question Adams before issuing the visa and to advise him of the conditions which the State Department attached to it. Some friction had inevitably occurred as a consequence in his exchanges with Adams.

Republican Belfast

Martinez has reported to Washington that recent disturbances, such as those in Ardoyne and on the Springfield Road last weekend were in no way orchestrated by Sinn Fein or the IRA but were spontaneous and arose out of friction between the security forces and various hooligan and drug using elements. He has stressed the discipline within PIRA ranks but he observed to us that, while the ceasefire was holding, he understood from some of his clerical contacts that already some of the more hot-headed elements among the Provisionals were eager to re-commence. All incidents were, therefore, potentially dangerous. He thought that the decision to remove troops from the streets in West Belfast such as had begun to happen in certain areas from 11 October would help defuse matters. Martinez evidenced clear sympathy for the local residents who were baffled as to why the Army should appear at six in the morning or after midnight patrolling through their back gardens. (Martinez revealed that he travels regularly to attend Mass in the early morning in West Belfast; he had been there on yesterday morning and noted that troops were not in evidence).

Contacts with Unionist leaders

Martinez mentioned the interesting fact that in the early eighties, the US had withdrawn Ian Paisley's visa. This had been done because of what was perceived to be Paisley's advocacy of violence in public utterances, (verbal advocacy of paramilitarism is a ground for exclusion from the US). Paisley and other DUP figures meet regularly with him. Paisley is personally pleasant to Martinez, though he must know that Martinez is a practising Catholic. He was, however, annoyed at the deliberate decision to grant Jim Molyneux access at a higher level to the US

administration earlier this year, a decision prompted at least in part by Martinez' advice that Molyneaux should be built up. The situation had not been helped by an appointment with Nancy Soderberg falling through because of a crisis over Bosnia. Martinez currently faced the tricky issue of recommending the level of access for Paisley during a visit to the US planned to take place shortly. While he did not see Paisley as necessarily grandstanding as he had done during the recent infamous meeting with Prime Minister Major, his capacity to do the unpredictable after any meeting was a factor to be weighed. Nevertheless he remarked that a Paisley outburst on the Larry King show would have an educational impact on an American audience.

Loyalist Spokesmen

Warming to the theme of Paisley, the DUP and loyalists generally, Martinez volunteered that there was also no doubt that the DUP currently represented a section of Unionist opinion that should not be ignored. He could detect what he thought were significant differences with regard to future strategy between Paisley and other prominent members of the DUP. There was no doubt that not everyone favoured the leader's policy of negativism. Paisley appeared completely unsure of what to do next. Martinez had also had some contacts with Ervine and McMichael. Ervine, he felt was adept at pushing himself forward which accounted for at least some of the media high-profile he had received in recent weeks. He would have to deal shortly with a visa application from Ervine which, as in the case of Adams and others on the Sinn Fein side, is complicated by serious criminal convictions, in Ervine's case a sentence of 11 years for possession of explosives.

Relations between NSC and the State Department

Martinez claimed these were generally good, despite the predilection of the NSC to leak all over the place. He noted wryly that most NSC people were ex-State Department, CIA and FBI! In general, it was true that the State Department was not very popular in the US. It was still regarded as elitist and here, Martinez reflected that, though it was no longer WASP and male, it continued to be staffed in large measure by Ivy League graduates. There is no doubt that, with regard to Administration policy on Irish affairs, the balance has shifted away from the State Department and to the NSC. This was exacerbated in that, at a time of down-sizing generally in the State Department, which had just had its numbers cut by law, one of the three persons dealing with Irish affairs had been moved, and given responsibility for the Baltic States. The new Irish Desk Officer was Paul Van Son who, together with his superior (who had responsibility also for Northern Europe) had now to cope with an issue that was currently hotting up politically.

US Aid Plan

Martinez had heard reports, though he did not have specifics, that the promised US Aid Programme would be cobbled together over the

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next fortnight in time to make an appearance before next month's elections. He was less well informed than were we concerning the latest move by Congressman Ben Gilman to make Northern Ireland eligible for investments guaranteed by the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). However he reminded us of OPIC's unhappy first involvement in Northern Ireland, a venture with Mackie's which lost a good deal of money. Several months ago he had been visited by a lawyer acting for OPIC who was in Belfast to see whether OPIC could recoup any of the money lost.

In discussing just what sort of aid might be forthcoming, Mr O'Donovan recalled a recent meeting with Joe Kennedy's aide/associate, Frank Costello, who had taken a number of suggestions regarding possible assistance on board. In this connection, we wondered what Martinez thought of a major flagship project of an infrastructural nature, such as a road. Martinez was emphatically negative on this, saying that the average US taxpayer is constantly complaining that Congress is not spending sufficient on roads in the US. He thought any politician could get into trouble for proposing to spend tax payers money on roads abroad. (Comment: You will have seen that although Joe Kennedy has adopted Frank Costello's idea of a President's Highway from Belfast to Dublin, he proposes to "leverage" funding for it through the International Fund for Ireland!) Martinez is, however, pushing the Springvale Campus and is supportive of UU Vice Chancellor Trevor Smith's efforts to fund raise in the US. He suggests that American money should fund a particular chair together with an identifiable building on the Campus.

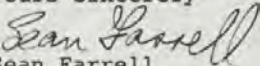
The London and Dublin Embassies

Martinez said he is a friend of former Ambassador, Ray Seitz, whom he described, unsurprisingly, as something of an anglophile. (Seitz is likely to be championed by most career diplomats in the US system since he had struck a blow for them being the first of them appointed as Ambassador in London). While Martinez did not specifically advert to the current status of relations between the Embassies in London and Dublin, current his tone implied that, with the arrival of Admiral Crowe, things had improved.

Future Contacts

We have not had Martinez in the Secretariat before and contacts with his predecessor were limited to social meetings (eg Archard was in here for a farewell lunch for Marcus Dodds). Martinez made it clear that he would like to maintain contact with us and mentioned that times were different now than had been the case several years ago, when the NIO had discouraged a US Vice-Consul from visiting somebody on the other side down here!

Yours sincerely


Sean Farrell

cc Michael Collins, Embassy Washington