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21 DECEMBER 1993

TO HQ FROM WASHINGTON

FOR DAVID DONOGHEU FROM MICHAEL COLLINS

INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT CLINTON BY CONOR O'CLERY, IRISH TIMES

- 1. As discussed, I attach a copy of President Clinton's written interview with Conor O'Clery of the Irish Times which should appear in tomorrow's newspaper. The replies have gone through a lengthy screening process at both State Department and the NSC and were personally approved by the President this morning.

The following points are relevant:

- Adams Visa

The reply in relation to the Adams visa about which we spoke at the weekend and about which also the Ambassador and myself were in direct contact with the White House on Saturday night, is a considerable improvement on the earlier draft. As you know, our concern was that the original draft was somewhat harsh and did not adequately reflect the changed circumstances arising from the Joint Declaration and the need to keep the Adams visa under review in this context.

- Appeal to IRA

The text also now includes a reiteration, at our request, of the President's appeal to "stop the killing and the violence and pursue peace through constructive dialogue."

RESPONSES TO CONOR O'CLERY QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT
OF NORTHERN IRELAND

- Q. How has the end of the Cold War changed the special strategic relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom, and is this reflected in U.S. policy on Northern Ireland?
- A. I have made clear that as long as I am President, the United States' relationship with the United Kingdom will indeed be special. Our relationship with the United Kingdom is unique and historic and we continue to share a common strategic world vision and a commitment to acting on common values. We are working closely together on issues ranging from trade negotiations to NATO reform.

U.S. policy on Northern Ireland is made in the context of the deep ties of friendship and history the American people enjoy with the peoples of both Ireland and Britain. In a time in which the headlines remind us daily of the folly of violent nationalism in Europe and, at the same time, the new hope for peace in the Middle East, I want to add America's voice, and my personal support, to the forces of peace in Northern Ireland.

- Q. You have said you are prepared to work aggressively to promote efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. In what way will you do this and in the future?
- A. In the early weeks of my Presidency, I reviewed in detail the situation in Northern Ireland. I discussed the issue with Prime Minister Major in February and Prime Minister Reynolds in March. Taking these discussions and our own review into account, I have kept the idea of a special U.S. representative under active consideration. At the same time, I have strongly supported Irish and British government efforts to restart a serious political dialogue involving the two governments and the parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland.

I also committed the Administration to taking the initiative, for the first time, in seeking funding in our budget request for the International Fund for Ireland.

Throughout this year, we have reiterated on numerous occasions our rejection of violence by any side and our support for the political process. I again underscored publicly my strong interest in promoting peace and reconciliation on October 30 in support of the efforts of the Irish and British governments, and yet again when I met with Irish Deputy Prime Minister Dick Spring November 16.

I am convinced the December 15 Joint Declaration of Prime Minister Reynolds and Prime Minister Major offers an historic opportunity to end the cycle of bloodshed. I think the best approach for the U.S. now is to continue to encourage this courageous and visionary initiative.

At this crucial time in the search for peace, let me reiterate a central message of my own statement welcoming the Joint Declaration: The time has come for all those who claim a legitimate stake in the future of Northern Ireland to stop the killing and the violence and pursue peace through constructive dialogue.

Q. What would you say to Irish-Americans who feel you have not fulfilled election promises made to them (e.g., a visa for Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams; appointment of a special envoy; raising human rights issues with Britain)?

A. I would say to them: Look at our record of engagement on Northern Ireland. Look at our support for the process which lead to the historic December 15 declaration. Look at the attention we devote to Northern Ireland in our annual human rights report. And look at the extraordinary opportunity that now presents itself for peace.

Q. Given that the British Government has established ongoing contacts with Sinn Fein with a view to establishing peace, is there not a case for granting a U.S. visa to Mr. Adams now, so that Irish-Americans can hear first-hand what his peace proposals are?

A. As you know, Gerry Adams was refused a U.S. visa earlier this year. That decision followed a careful review of his case and was consistent with our own immigration laws regarding terrorist activity. We will, of course, keep the issue under review as the developing situation warrants, especially in light of events flowing from the December 15 Joint Declaration by Prime Minister Reynolds and Prime Minister Major.

Q. Do the Irish and British governments have a veto on the appointment of a special envoy? If the current peace process breaks down, would you consider appointing a U.S. envoy?

A. The Irish and British governments do not have a veto on the special envoy, nor has either of them suggested they should. However, we must work constructively with both governments in the cause of peace. In this regard, the notion of a special envoy remains very much alive. As I have said many times, the United States stands ready to contribute to peace in any appropriate way.

The December 15 Joint Declaration by the Irish and British Prime Ministers offers the best hope for progress. At this stage, we believe the U.S. energies should be directed to support progress toward peace within the framework on which the British and Irish governments are working together.

Q. Are you going to visit Ireland on your trip to Europe next June and will you visit Northern Ireland if you do?

A. I would very much like to visit Ireland during my Presidential tenure and look forward to arranging mutually convenient dates.

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- The Special Envoy

The President repeats that the US stands ready to contribute to peace in any appropriate way and says that "the notion of a special envoy remains very much alive".

- The Special Strategic Relationship with Britain

The confirmation, in response to O'Clery's question, of the "special strategic relationship" between the United States and Britain is now balanced, again at our request, by the statement "US policy on Northern Ireland is made in the context of the deep ties of friendship and history the American people enjoy with the peoples of both (White House emphasis) Ireland and Britain."

- Visit to Ireland

According to the President's reply a visit to Ireland is now only contingent on agreeing mutually convenient dates. He says "I would very much like to visit Ireland during my Presidential tenure and look forward to arranging mutually convenient dates".

(TOTAL NO OF PAGES: 4)

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