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Reference Code: 2021/48/96

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Meeting between Tánaiste and U.S. Secretary of State.

Richard C. Holbroke

Venue: UN Plaza Hotel, New York

Date: 28 September, 1994

Present: Irish side: Tánaiste; Secretary Dorr;
A/Secretary Barrington

U.S. side: A/Secretary of State Holbroke; State
Department Official, Mike Lekson

1. The meeting, which took place at Holbroke's request, lasted 35 minutes. It was clear during the course of the meeting that its purpose was to:

- acquaint the new Assistant Secretary of State with the Tánaiste
- sound us out on the venue and level of the U.S. meeting with Gerry Adams
- signal a more cooperative relationship between the State Department and the White House on Irish policy
- ask us for specific ideas as to how the U.S. Government could help with the Northern Ireland peace process.

2. Holbroke began by stating his long-standing interest in Ireland. He is a friend and former business colleague of Tony O'Reilly and has visited O'Reilly in Ireland on several occasions staying at Castlemartin, Ashford etc. He had known all the Kennedy family except Jack, and the Ambassador in Dublin was a particularly close and valued friend. He voiced a particular admiration for the efforts of the Taoiseach and Tánaiste on Northern Ireland and said that as Asst. Secretary of State he would do everything possible to help. Noting that the Adams visit had not yet made much of a "splash" in the U.S., he said that he and Peter Tarnoff, Deputy Secretary of State, had been giving some thought to the proposed meeting between Adams and State Department officials. On the venue the choice had been between the State Department itself and the Foreign Service Club. He had faced this kind of problem before when he dealt with Asian affairs in trying to decide on how to meet representatives of Tibet, Taiwan etc. His own view, formed at that time, was that it was better to do the thing right in order to show that the U.S. had nothing to hide and were not somehow ashamed of their actions. As to level, they proposed that Adams be met by Mike Lekson, adding that

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"you can't get much lower than that". There would be no photographs.

3. The Tánaiste said that once the decision to receive Adams had been taken the venue was less important than the level. A high level meeting could be a problem. At Holbroke's request the Tánaiste and Secretary briefed Holbroke on the origins of the Northern Ireland problem (of which he appears to have only the sketchiest knowledge), the efforts that had been made to deal with it, and the prospects for the current peace process.
4. Holbroke said that the conflicts over the past year between the State Department and the White House on Irish policy had been amongst the bitterest he had known, not helped by the activities of the former U.S. Ambassador in London, Ray Seitz. Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith has played a decisive part in the Adams visa controversy. Had Holbroke been in the State Department at the time the attitude of State might have been different. In any event he was determined that the State Department and the White House would act in a much more cooperative way in the future. He himself intended to become heavily involved but he was not entirely clear which way to go. In this connection he would welcome specific ideas as to how the U.S. could help.
5. The Tánaiste said that the Government values highly the support given to date by the President and Vice-President. They had played a crucial role and the continued interest of the U.S. Administration would be important as the process developed. As to specific ideas, he thought that we would be in a position to put forward concrete proposals in a month or so. In the meantime he would ask Ambassador Gallagher to maintain contact with Holbroke. Holbroke said that he had intended to visit Ireland for a conference on U.S.-Euro Atlantic Relations in Dromoland in November but was not now sure if his schedule would allow this. If he did travel, he would welcome an opportunity to see the Tánaiste again at that time. The Tánaiste agreed.
6. The meeting ended with a brief discussion on Bosnia in which Holbroke is also heavily involved and which, he said, would take a considerable amount of his time. He was reorganising the European Affairs side of the State Department and he expected that Mr. Lekson would be freed up to devote more time to Anglo-Irish relations and the Northern Ireland issue than had been possible in the past.

E. Barrington
 E. Barrington,
 Assistant Secretary,
 Political Division.
 c.c. PST, PSS, A/Sec. O'hUiginn, Ambassador, Washington