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Cathy

(14) PST, + Finlay.
A/Sec O'Connell
- Mr + MURRAY
- Mr B. MCCARTHY
Or Mangan
Mr T Dalton
SECRETARIAT

Tánaiste's Meeting with President Clinton

Friday, 2 September, 1994.

The meeting took place in a house on the island of Martha's Vineyard which had been made available to the President for a few days vacation. It began about 10 a.m. and lasted some 50 minutes.

Ambassador
Wren
Lover

The President was accompanied by the Deputy Director and another staff member (Sandy Vershbow and Neil Wolin) of the National Security Council; the Tánaiste by Ambassador Gallagher, Mr. O hUiginn, Mr. Finlay, Mr. Foley and the undersigned.

Summary

The meeting was informal and extremely cordial throughout. The Tánaiste thanked the President for his help and briefed him on the situation since the IRA announcement of a complete cessation of military operations. The President, who conveyed his good wishes to the Taoiseach, seemed knowledgeable, well-briefed and very well disposed. He gave every indication of a willingness to help further and asked to be guided on how best he and the US could do so.

It was agreed that the International Fund for Ireland could be the right vehicle for increased US assistance and the Fund is to be asked to set up a Working Group to make recommendations.

The President thought that it would be easier to get proposals for additional funding through Congress if in parallel there were a programme of incentives etc to encourage private, business investment.

As well as thanking the President warmly for the role which he and his Administration had played in achieving the cessation which had now been announced, the Tánaiste emphasised to the President the importance of consolidating what had been done and, in particular, the importance of providing reassurance at this stage to the Unionists. The US, in particular, as a friend to both Governments and both communities could do this. The President fully accepted this and will do what he can. He asked again to be kept briefed on how best he could continue to help.

While his schedule for next year has not yet been fixed, the President accepted in principle the Tánaiste's renewed invitation to him to visit Ireland. He said he would like to go "at a time which is good for the process and good for me here"

Details

The meeting began with some lighthearted conversation about golf between the President on the one hand and the Tánaiste and Mr. Foley on the other.

President Clinton then asked the Tánaiste how things stood in relation to Northern Ireland?

Tánaiste

We are very grateful indeed for your assistance and also, I must say, to your Ambassador, Ambassador Kennedy, Nancy Soderberg (National Security Council) and others. It has been a good week. We set out to achieve certain things and we are well on the way to achieving them. Your own statement was a very great help in this. There has been an absolute cessation of violence and an acceptance by the IRA that it has no future. They have crossed a Rubicon and this is a very big step for them.

Your own decision to grant the visa to Gerry Adams was very influential. It allowed him to see the strength of Irish-America which he could not have seen otherwise. I know the difficulties it caused for a time from your viewpoint. But even the British came to understand that it was the right decision. There was a great reinforcement to the message to Adams in your statement as he left the USA when you said that he was expected to deliver. Well he has. He has done a great deal to keep his people together and ensure that there was no split.

It is important now that things be allowed to settle a bit. We hope for reciprocity on the other side - the next agenda must be the conversion of the Loyalist side to the need for peace and a peace dividend.

It is not easy for them. They are fearful and they fear that deals have been made against their interests. Of course, no deals have been made. All our cards are on the table. We started from the Downing Street Declaration and worked on from there.

The visit of the US Delegation last week was very helpful. They took a clear message from us in Dublin that there must be an absolute cessation of violence. This message was delivered. Adams realised that there is only one way into the democratic process and they have taken that. Of course, his statements use a certain amount of padding about "our people" etc; and there has been a hiccup with the British in regard to the fact that the word "permanent" was not used.

This has now been largely overcome. The Prime Minister and Sir Patrick Maynew both said that they would be satisfied if

Sinn Fein/IRA said that they agreed with Dublin's interpretation. What we now hope is that both Governments will work forward from here.

President Clinton

What can we do to help?

Tánaiste

The International Fund for Ireland is very important. Your putting the funding through Congress has been very helpful. We can develop that and look at projects. If we can get a period of stability and a signal from Washington that new projects under the Fund can be looked at it would be very helpful to both communities. As it is the Unionists have reservations and they feel threatened so that anything you can say or do to provide reassurance would be helpful. The fact that Tony Lake spoke to Jim Molyneux was very helpful indeed. They feel very isolated at present; and the more contact your Office has with them the better. We are trying to get across to them too that we want to work with them.

The emphasis on consent was very important in the Downing Street Declaration. Any strong signals from Washington could help stabilise the situation. Economic aid could be an important encouragement and an indication that the US has looked afresh at the situation. We in the South have done well economically over the past thirty years thanks to US investment. It has been difficult, however, over the same period to convince investors to invest in Northern Ireland in face of the situation which has prevailed there.

Ambassador Gallagher

There have been serious unemployment black spots. It is hard now for people to realise the real prospects there are of a peace dividend. There has been some thinking about a university campus on the peace line; a possible enterprise zone between North and South and so on.

The International Fund for Ireland has been funded mainly by the United States and the European Union. It was established by the two Governments as an independent body and Jim Lyons is your own observer on it. It provides a model which works. So, maybe the International Fund for Ireland could be asked to look at the options for increased assistance?

Tánaiste

Yes I think that is a good idea. We have had a lot of contact with Jim Lyons. (We took him to ...)

President Clinton

I have asked our people to look at this and they are working on ideas. I agree very much with the idea of asking the International Fund for Ireland to come up with its own ideas. I would like to have some kind of joint public/private initiative. That would mean increasing the Fund but also encouraging private industry to invest there. That would go down better in the Congress. The situation is that we have had to eliminate some 100 to 200 of our own domestic programmes.

Of course, we will not miss it (i.e. additional aid for Northern Ireland) in such a big country as this but a role also for encouragement for private business could make it easier to sell to Congress in this climate.

You have the Irish here dancing in the streets! They are full of hope and they want us to contribute to the extent that we have a specific strategy. I would think we should do something with the Fund but it will make it easier if private enterprise too is involved. That will make it easier to sell in Congress.

We are working "on the same page". I agree with you in your aim of reassuring the Unionists. Jim Molyneaux seemed very pleased at our outreach to him.

What we need from you is a constant guide as to what best to do.

When I met first with Albert Reynolds I said that the US ought to be more forthcoming. We have been too tied to British views. Of course, their attitudes have been understandable in view of the IRA. But the British now think we did right in giving the visa to Adams.

We would like guidance. We are open to suggestions as to the next steps.

Ambassador Gallagher

The relationship which Tony Lake (National Security Adviser) has developed with Jim Molyneaux is very important.

Tánaiste

Given the historical links which the Protestant community in Northern Ireland also has in the USA we should develop this whole area.

The Unionists feel threatened. Of course, John Hume has done a lot to reach out to them. But they felt rather betrayed by the dialogue between John Hume and Gerry Adams.

I think it would be a good thing too if you could look at the next generation of politicians in Northern Ireland and do something to help through the NDI (National Democratic Institute).

President Clinton

Yes - we think we can do things through the NDI.

Tánaiste

Yes, that will be very important. Because the younger generation are beginning to realise that the principle of consent is now accepted in the South.

We will also want to develop cross-border links. This does not have to affect issues of sovereignty in relation to links with the UK. What we are aiming to do is to get people to work together in a pluralist society with more exposure to each other and to the outside world. We want to let them see that in your society in this country there is a model for pluralism.

Ambassador Gallagher

We have said clearly that there would be no change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland without consent of a majority there. This is very important.

Tánaiste

Time is a great healer. We are working now for "parity of esteem" for both communities in Northern Ireland.

A lot of things are happening on this. Twenty or thirty years ago there was a determination in many quarters to unite Ireland irrespective of the wishes of a majority in Northern Ireland. Now the principle of consent is accepted.

The key now is reciprocity. If the Loyalist paramilitaries can be brought to stop, then a bedrock foundation will have been laid.

Mr. O hUiginn

The American dimension has been very educational in this.

President Clinton

We will go to work on that. Is there anything else on this whole issue?

The Tánaiste spoke again of the psychological importance of contacts with the Unionists.

Tánaiste

I had lunch recently with your Ambassador in London, Admiral Crowe, and he has had contact with them. I enjoyed that meeting with him. You could perhaps follow up on the link he has made with Jim Molyneaux.

Of course, we have our own contacts. Indeed, we would have been in Northern Ireland to meet them today if we were not here. We have to show them that our position is not threatening but it is hard to convince them that there has been no deal.

Mr. Dorr added that these kind of contacts between the US and the Unionists were not alone of direct help in providing reassurance but also helped the Unionists to realise that Irish Government contacts with the US were not directed against them as some kind of conspiracy.

Tánaiste

Yes. They feel threatened by our contacts with you and it helps if you reassure them by seeking to reach out to them and emphasising that your Administration wants to work with both Governments and is friendly to both communities. Some of them say that our visits here are an attempt to play the green card in Washington. That is not the case.

In fairness the present Prime Minister John Major saw the need (for peace) and said "let's do it". It took three or four years to engage the attention of his predecessor Mrs. Thatcher.

Ambassador Gallagher

In interviews this morning on National Public Radio and on Network Television the Tánaiste emphasised the importance of the fact that the United States is friendly to both communities and wants to work with both Governments. Senator Leahy telephoned me and said that we would have his full support in our efforts. He is a very good friend.

President Clinton

We contacted him too. I may call him again after you leave.

We can do a lot of things and we will. It is very important to have a plan.

Mr. O hUiginn

A lot of the people in the ghettos are now coming down from a high. There are a lot of little Napoleons there. They will be running around with nothing to do but if there is a clear pay-off in economic terms then Adams can steady his troops. It is very important that you should reach out to areas which have not yet been reached by the Fund.

Ambassador Gallagher

We could talk about setting up a working group of the Fund.

Tánaiste

That seems a good idea.

The journalists have been asking how much money I am looking for! That is not the purpose of our meeting. But if we set up a working group that would be a good idea.

President Clinton

Fine.

Tánaiste

I am not asking for two or three hundred million dollars!

President Clinton

If I break 80 in golf you can have it!

Mr. O hUiginn

Why not try it on an Irish course Mr. President?

Tánaiste

Yes, indeed, that would be a good idea. I will tell you a story. Nick Faldo was playing in Ireland. As he was teeing off he noticed a carpark and he asked his caddy how far is it to the carpark? The response was "Ah Sir I don't think it will trouble you"!

I will send you a book on Irish golf courses. It is very good. Tom Watson plays regularly in Ireland at Ballybunion.

President Clinton

That is a famous course.

I was reading a very good book recently by a man who was formerly a journalist on the "Philadelphia Enquirer". He went as a caddy on the European Tour for a year and he wrote about his experience. He has given some most remarkable descriptions of Scotland, Ireland and England.

What are we going to say to the Press?

There was some discussion in relation to the handling of the Press. It had been envisaged on the American side that the President would not talk to the Press since it was likely if he did that he would be pressed with difficult questions on the current situation in Cuba and Haiti.

Mr. Foley

The Irish press would love it if you could talk to them Mr. President.

President Clinton (smiling)

I would be in trouble with the US press for that but I can make a statement and you can talk to them. You can say that we are asking the International Fund for Ireland to consider the matter and report also that I assured you that I was interested in the issue.

US Official

You need a reference to the British also.

There was some further discussion of the President's vacation arrangements for the day and whether he would play more golf. He said that he had the day off and was proposing to go with his family to Carey Island which is owned by a friend of his

and which is a short distance away by water from Martha's Vineyard. There is an old house there in which hang hats presented by General Sherman and General Pershing. President Grant visited it 150 years ago and the whole place has been left virtually untouched.

Tánaiste

I will get into trouble at home if I don't invite you to pay a visit to Ireland.

President Clinton

When would you like it? I will look at it. We have not firmed up plans for next year yet. Maybe I will go at a time when it is good for the process and good for me here.

Would you check my visa? (This was a joking reference to reports some time ago that to help his opponent in the Presidential election the Foreign Office in London had gone through files to check on his activities in the belief that something might be found which would be of help to his opponent.)

In January 1969 I was there with a friend from Oxford. We were in Trinity College and we met a lovely girl - I remember her name - Hilary Harte. She has since married and divorced and remarried and she is now Professor of Literature at University of Texas in Austin. Although I had not met her since 1969 she fundraised for my candidacy in her home area while her former husband did so elsewhere (on the East coast?).

Mr. Finlay ventured to ask the President to sign two copies of the US Government Statement. The President willingly agreed to do so and also signed a statement at the request of the National Security Council official. In doing so he used a fountain pen borrowed from the Tánaiste which the Tánaiste explained had been given to him by Neo-Data in Colorado. The President liked the pen and the Tánaiste invited him to keep it.

Mr. O hUiginn

The whole thing would not have happened, Mr. President, without the US role.

Ambassador Gallagher

I said that a few days ago on the McNeil-Lehrer Report.

There was then some discussion in which the President praised the McNeil-Lehrer Report as an indepth programme.

Ambassador Gallagher noted that the Wall Street Journal had praised the President.

The Tánaiste commented on the volte face which some of the press had had to do in Ireland following the announcement by the IRA.

President Clinton

In fairness, the Wall Street Journal is an old-fashioned US paper. It makes a clear distinction between editorial matter and reporting and it does some of the best investigative reporting. But there is still a firewall maintained between editorial opinion and straight-forward reporting. The Washington Post and the New York Times have long since ceased to do so.

The meeting ended at this point with an exchange of courtesies. The President and the Tánaiste walked out together to speak to Irish news media representatives and a BBC TV crew who had remained outside. (The US press corps had left for the press centre in Edgartown where the Tánaiste subsequently gave a press conference on his own.) The President spoke to the Irish media and BBC TV in an informal statement outside the house and then left it to the Tánaiste to continue and to answer questions.

MDm
5 September 1996