



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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*msg 2710*  
 20 OCTOBER 1995

TO HQ FROM WASHINGTON  
 FOR B SCANNELL FROM P HENNESSY

MEETING WITH NANCY SODERBERG

COPY TO:

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 MR. F. MURRAY  
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*Connelly A*

1. I met with Nancy Soderberg at the White House following her return with National Security Adviser Tony Lake from London. I said that we had valued our contact with the US team over the past few days, and were acutely aware of the importance of continuing to work very closely with them.
2. Ms Soderberg said she is convinced that both Sinn Fein and the British want to reach an agreement. It is essential to maintain momentum, and that the discussions be pushed ahead as rapidly as possible. There is clearly concern that time is running short. She referred to the fact that Senator Mitchell (whom I met and spoke with briefly on his way out from a briefing) will be unavailable in the first two weeks of November. Referring to the President's trip, she noted that we were also running out of time at the other end of the time spectrum. For all that, there was a sense that a deal could still be done, with maximum effort on all sides.
3. The first priority was that Sinn Fein and the British must begin to speak directly to each other, and that they deal explicitly with the substance of the outstanding issues. In particular, Sinn Fein need to tell the British, as they have told others, that they are



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prepared for serious, credible discussions on decommissioning, and that Sinn Fein too are prepared to look at the findings of the Commission on their merits. This afternoon's meeting between Antram and McGuinness, of which they had not yet had word, would be very significant in this respect.

4. As regards the Unionists, Soderberg confirmed the account of the hard line presentation as conveyed by Lake to the Tanaiste, but felt that in the circumstances, and with Taylor present, it was not surprising and hopefully not definitive. The British side emphasised to them their hope that Trimble can still be brought to acquiesce in the twin-track approach, but that he is not there yet. The White House see the Assembly proposal as critical to any prospect of bringing him on board. Soderberg expressed concern that Hume's response has been unnecessarily negative (even by contrast with Adams), and asked that we use our influence to soften his position. She emphasised that what is at issue is not the substance (about which she fully understands the reservations), but the perceived unwillingness even to discuss the proposal in the political track.
5. As regards fixing a date for the commencement of political talks, Soderberg quoted the British to the effect that we were now very close, if not already at, the limit of the period within which a pre-end year date could be chosen. Her own view was that while limited slippage on this front would not necessarily bring the edifice down, if all else was agreed, it was a further source of difficulty which we could well do without.
6. Reflecting the overriding importance the NSC team attach to expediting progress towards an agreement, Soderberg said that they had been encouraged to hear that the Anglo-Irish Conference on Tuesday had agreed to advance preparatory work on the functioning of the Commission. She emphasised that Commission membership was a matter for the British and Irish Governments, in consultation with the other parties. She presumed, however,

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unlike the format sometimes used in labour negotiations, that instead of each Government nominating a member, all the nominees should be acceptable to each of the parties. As an aid to deliberations, she offered to make available to the Embassy in the next few days a list of names of potential Commission members.

7. At various points in the discussion, Soderberg emphasised the particular nature of the US role, which (if it was to be useful), required it to operate in a discreet and low-key manner. Some of the media coverage had not been helpful, and it was very difficult to expect the British Government, or even the Unionists, to hold constructive meetings with them against that background. She mentioned that Conor O'Clery had already been in touch since her return, and, referring to the Irish Times article on 16 October, explained the difficulties caused by the editing, unknown to him, of his copy prior to publication. I said that we were very conscious of the nature and character of the US role, and would also seek to ensure that this was understood by those with whom we were in discussion.

#### President's Visit to N Ireland

8. We touched briefly on the President's programme. Soderberg said they were still wrestling with how to ensure balance. Questions continued to be raised about the Mackey's site, but they are clearly reluctant to discard an option which they find attractive in many respects, both practical and political. The question of arrangements for contact with political leaders is also undecided. They are at present debating whether if they have separate meetings with Hume (in Derry) and Trimble, they can take care of other party leaders at an omnibus social event. They are concerned at Paisley's reaction: one possibility is an encounter of some kind while the President is at Westminster.



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Conclusion

10. The following points emerged clearly from the discussion:
- US attach highest importance to maintaining and, if possible, accelerating the momentum of discussions.
  - Sinn Fein and the British need to engage without delay in direct, substantive dialogue
  - Assembly proposal offers best prospect of securing Unionist engagement with the twin-track model
  - US continue to be actively involved, but nature of its role needs to be understood.
11. We will pass on the list of possible Commission nominees when it becomes available

ENDS

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