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Meeting between the Tánaiste and Ms. Nancy Soderberg
17th September 1996

Present were: The Tánaiste, Mr. O hUiginn

Ms. Nancy Soderberg, Ambassador Kennedy-Smith, Mr. Norland

1. The meeting began with a brief discussion of Senator Mitchell's role. Ms. Soderberg was not yet certain what precisely the Senator's function would be in relation to the forthcoming US Presidential TV debates. The President wanted him to help on them. There was some concern in Washington whether this might interfere with his role in the talks. The Irish side thought that this could safely be left to Senator Mitchell's own judgement.
2. The Tánaiste then briefed Ms. Soderberg on the current state of the Belfast talks. Matters were far from the spirit which had prevailed during President Clinton's visit. He outlined the current bilateral/trilateral contacts with the UUP, in an endeavour to get around the decommissioning difficulty. It was unclear as yet whether the unionists wanted off that particular hook, in which case we would try to give them political cover, or whether they would keep raising the fence, in a way which amounted, whether they intended it or not, to a refusal of any inclusive process. If we departed too much from reality in an effort to be helpful to them, we could be hostage to that situation later.
3. Ms. Soderberg discussed briefly Trimble's position, particularly in the light of Drumcree and the damage he had done. She wondered if he had been forced to rethink his position. The Tánaiste said there was no sign of that,

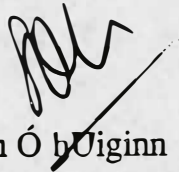
and analysed the various factors contributing to Trimble's insecurity, which led him into these false positions or prevented him from escaping from them.

4. Ms. Soderberg reviewed the prospects of a renewed ceasefire. She was urging the British to take any such initiatives seriously. The British seemed disposed to do so. They were worried about the possibility of further atrocities. The US-Administration would give further strong messages to Sinn Féin on the damage which another bomb attack would do to the political prospects and to British attitudes.
5. Ms. Soderberg expressed some concern at the position among the loyalists, although she felt this might have steadied. The fact they were still in the Talks was positive. The Administration had been strongly urging the British to do something in relation to loyalist prisoners. The British did not have any ideas in that respect.
6. In relation to the talks process, she remained cautiously optimistic that a transition could be made to substantive talks and that the decommissioning issue could be prevented from wrecking matters.
7. Ms. Soderberg said that they were planning to invite some protagonists to Washington shortly. She was not sure whether that included Trimble, who, in a sense, deserved punishment. He had singlehandedly wrecked the tourism industry. (Her own parents were among those who cancelled a proposed visit to the North.)
8. Ms. Soderberg touched on the Pittsburgh Conference. They were anxious to keep the focus on business. The political dimension would be largely

confined to the opening statements and presence of the Tánaiste and Secretary of State.

9. Ms. Soderberg also flagged that under a new terrorism law they would have to list suspect organisations, who would then be subject, at the discretion of the Attorney General, to various sanctions (e.g. closure of offices, freezing funds, etc.). The IRA would be included on this list. They were unsure how to handle the loyalists. Their present thinking was to mention them, but in a context which would give value to the sustained loyalist ceasefire.
10. Ms. Soderberg also raised the current practice of boycotting. The Tánaiste outlined the opposition of the Irish Government, and the difficulty of the Governments influencing customers' personal choice. The problem was real in certain areas, but perhaps not as widespread as media reports suggested.
11. In the course of the meeting Ms. Soderberg also touched casually on a number of other topics. The President was looking forward to the EU/US Summit meeting and was already dreaming of golf. December 4th was a problem, because of the Congressional Ball. It was still not absolutely certain that the President would go to Lisbon for the OSCE Summit. However, on the assumption that he did, he might try to repeat the pattern of the previous year in Madrid, and hold the EU/US meeting on Sunday. His timetable was also complicated by Thanksgiving.
12. She recalled also some points which had been raised with the Taoiseach in the course of his visit. They hoped the Europeans would contribute the suggested \$20 million to KEDO. They had also raised with the Taoiseach the issue of the mutual recognition agreement on standardisation, where they had a problem with pharmaceuticals. She also expressed appreciation of the

cooperation of the Irish Presidency on their current Burundi initiative. (At a subsequent dinner in the Taoiseach's Department, which went over much the same ground on Anglo-Irish matters, she stressed the desirability of Ireland joining the PFP, and enquired whether the Tánaiste proposed to visit Iran.)



Sean Ó hUiginn

18 September 1996