

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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FAX TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

Date: *23 September 1999*

To: *Gary Ansbro, Tim O'Connor*

Fax: *093531 4785949*

Subject: *Martin McGuinness' visit here*

Sender: *Ambassador Hugh Swift*

YOU SHOULD RECEIVE 2 PAGE(S), INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET. IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE ALL THE PAGES, PLEASE CALL (+2712) 3425062.

Thank you for your Fax of 22 September with the transcript of the McGuinness interview.

So far as I can establish, the visit has had absolutely no echo in the media here. The British High Commissioner raised the matter with me yesterday en marge of a larger meeting. She, like me, had heard from Headquarters of the visit, but had heard nothing here.

My efforts to contact President Mbeki's people were fruitless, because, as you know, he is in New York, and his key people are with him.

This morning, I was able to make some progress: Minister Zuma's office confirmed to me that the Minister had met Mr. McGuinness and Mr. Kelly on Friday, but they were unable to give me any detail of the substance, as everyone who was at the meeting left immediately afterwards for the airport without briefing on the discussion. They are to follow up and get back to me. It was the impression in the Minister's office that there was also a brief meeting between the visitors and President Mbeki - again no information available on the substance.

I also spoke to Roelf Meyer, who was mentioned by Mr. McGuinness in his interview. (You will be aware that Meyer, who has had previous involvement with the Northern Ireland peace process going back over a number of years, was the National Party Government's chief negotiator in the multiparty talks here that led to the end of apartheid. He was also Secretary

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General of the NP and its Deputy Leader in the National Assembly. In mid 1997 he came to the conclusion that the National Party had no constituency and no future and left to establish, with Bantu Holomisa, the United Democratic Movement.)

He told me that it was Cyril Ramaphosa who had asked him to meet Mr. McGuinness in the course of the visit. (Again for background, Ramaphosa is a former General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, former Secretary General of the ANC, was Chairperson of the 1994 Constituent Assembly, but left politics for business, where he has, I understand, been quite successful, when Thabo Mbeki was preferred for the Post of Deputy President and for the succession to President Mandela. Like Roelf Meyer, he has taken a consistent interest in Northern Ireland Affairs.) I have the impression that the McGuinness visit was arranged by Ramaphosa and the ANC Foreign Relations Committee.

Mr. McGuinness briefed Meyer on the present state of the Mitchell review and on relations between the parties. He expressed concerns similar to those he expressed in the Radio Ulster interview and to those expressed last week by Seamus Mallon, in particular that the Good Friday Agreement could collapse and that the situation might then deteriorate badly. He asked that Meyer and Ramaphosa issue a joint statement in an effort to restore momentum to the process.

Meyer's attitude was that this could be done, but he was not sure if it would be effective. He thought that it would be possible for him and Ramaphosa to go further, for example by travelling at an early date to Northern Ireland to have discussions with the parties, with a view in particular to putting pressure on the UUP who, in Meyer's opinion were the recalcitrant party. Meyer considered that the UUP might be more prepared to listen to someone with his background, who could relate better to the Unionists. He added that he would not, however wish to be prescriptive in the matter.

While, he told me, he wished to be as helpful as possible, he warned against any proposal for a visit to Northern Ireland by him (and Ramaphosa?) emanating from Sinn Féin: this he thought would be a kiss of death. He thought it better that the proposal should come from business circles, and he gave me the impression that he expected that this would now happen.

As I mentioned above, I hope to get more material later in the day from Minister Zuma's office, and shall of course convey it as quickly as possible.

Please let me know if you wish me to follow up further, say with Ramaphosa. (In my opinion he will not add much to what Meyer told me.)

Regards

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