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To: Mr. Teahon

From: Dermot Gallagher

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Anglo-Irish Division Report

-- Meeting with UUP Chairman

Washington Report

-- Meeting between Ambassador and Jim Steinberg

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MEETING BETWEEN AMBASSADOR Ó HUIGINN AND JIM STEINBERG, WHITE HOUSE, 9 SEPTEMBER 1999

Present: US side: Jim Steinberg, Dick Norland
Irish side: Ambassador O'Huiginn, Tom Russell

cc PSE, PSW, PSNC
Mr Taylor, Sir Stephen
Caroline Hill
Rob Li, Sinéad

Patten Report

1. The meeting, which had been arranged last week, provided the opportunity to brief the White House directly on the Government's endorsement of the Patten Report. We felt the report itself was an honourable and commendable attempt to discharge the mandate of the Good Friday Agreement which had been approved by the parties and endorsed by the vast majority of the people of the island of Ireland, North and South. The core proposals had the potential for real change. Our expectation was that the report would be implemented swiftly without clawbacks or selectivity. Sinn Féin had given the report a cautious "will study" reception and the unionists had perhaps not been as negative as could be feared on the core issues.

2. Steinberg said that the White House would be issuing a welcoming statement (to be finalised this afternoon). This would indicate that it would be inappropriate to comment in detail on the report but would endorse the approach towards a professional police force removed from politics. His concern was that the reaction on the Hill might not be too supportive. He felt that Congress would take its lead from Ben Gilman (Chairman of the House International Relations Committee) and he was not sure what tone Gilman would adopt. He asked that we stay in touch with Gilman's office. We had already been in touch and told him that Gilman would be broadly positive if cautious in his judgement, perhaps agreeing that the report could be effective but pointing out some issues that have not found their way into it - screening of candidates, for instance.

3. In reply to a query from the Ambassador he said that the US had not been asked to furnish a candidate for the Oversight Commissioner but would be prepared to consider an approach. (There had been very casual speculation at British official level that Kathy O'Toole might be a possibility).

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Mitchell Review

4. The Ambassador outlined for Steinberg the climate of events in the run-up to the review emphasising what had been achieved in the July negotiations (but which could not ultimately be brought over the line). The Bennett murder and the arms procurement events in the USA were setbacks and disquieting episodes. Trimble's position had not improved. Steinberg said that the President was concerned that people were being too defeatist. He himself worried that some were already thinking about fall-back positions and becoming less willing to "take risks for peace". He wondered how any kind of normalisation process and lack of violence could be sustained without political progress. The Ambassador listed the statements by the Minister and Minister of State aimed at avoiding precisely the danger the President had identified.

5. In going over some of the background to the positions of the main parties to the Agreement, the Ambassador outlined for Steinberg some of the difficulties that both Sinn Féin and the Ulster Unionists have in delivering their constituencies. The nature of the Republican movement and its internal structures meant that the capacity to deliver on decommissioning (de facto part of the Agreement process) had to be addressed carefully. Trimble has had difficulty in selling the consequences of the Agreement to his party and has increasingly narrowed his room for manoeuvre. The Mitchell review would require a serious confrontation of the parties with their present positions. The two governments were encouraging all of them to make the necessary compromises, both privately and publicly, and we hoped the Administration would do likewise.

6. Steinberg said there had already been a number of attempts to deliver on the Agreement. The question arose as to how credibility in the process could be maintained if the review did not work. Some thought might need to be given to further positive and negative incentives that might be brought to bear on both sides at present. On the positive side, he felt that thought should be given to what "goodies" could be put on the table (like the reconciliation event last April). He also felt that participants should be confronted fairly starkly with the risks of failure rather than the risks of moving forward. The British should be able to put some

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pressure on the unionists. The US would be prepared to do likewise with Sinn Féin.

7. If the Mitchell review did not work, the President would be glad to become involved, if this was felt to be useful. The Ambassador pointed out that failure of the review was not being considered and we would be glad of continuing US support for the present momentum, in terms of the movement needed on both the Unionist and Republican sides. All energies must be channeled into making the review a success - essentially by identifying and hopefully neutralising the factors which had thwarted the near success of "The Way Forward". If, in spite of best efforts, that did not produce agreement, the Governments would have to deal with the consequences, hopefully safeguarding the peace and securing all those advances in the Agreement - the explicit democratic mandate - whose implementation was not directly dependent on devolution, and finding some constructive holding pattern for the latter, pending a political will to agree that democratic mandate in full.

8. The conclusion of the meeting dealt with East Timor, which is covered in a separate report being sent to Political Division.

END

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Meeting With UUP Chairman, Denis Rogan

7 September, 1999

1. The Chairman of the Ulster Unionist Party, Denis Rogan, and its Treasurer, Jack Allen, met with Tim O'Connor and the undersigned in Holywood, Co. Down, on Tuesday to discuss the Mitchell Review. We have known both men well over a number of years.

2. Rogan was at considerable pains to emphasise that the UUP was absolutely serious about the Mitchell Review and very anxious to achieve a solution to the current impasse. He and Allen complained that there appeared to be widespread cynicism in the nationalist community, not only among Sinn Féin supporters but also within the SDLP, about the UUP's desire to reach an accommodation.

3. Rogan said that there was no credible alternative leader to Trimble within the UUP, and emphasised that Trimble, personally, very much wanted an agreement. However, Trimble's room for manoeuvre was being curtailed as time passed and, in particular, given the continued failure to implement the Good Friday Agreement. While Trimble might have shown more flexibility earlier in the year, the party was now very united behind his present stand of "no guns no Government". The UUP had some time ago moved from the need for prior decommissioning to "jumping together" with Sinn Féin, but could go no further.

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4. We pointed out that, despite their stated seriousness in wanting an inclusive arrangement, the reality was that the party had not yet convinced Sinn Féin, and indeed many in the wider nationalist community, of that seriousness. The sense nationalists had was of goalposts being constantly moved by the UUP. Rogan accepted that this perception existed and presented a real problem for them. We suggested that, if the commitment was genuine on all sides, George Mitchell could play a valuable role in bridging the gap of trust that clearly existed.

5. Rogan agreed that there was a huge gulf in terms of trust between Sinn Féin and the UUP, and each badly needed to help the other. The reality was that every partisan comment and hostile act by one camp made life more difficult for the other. As a businessman, he found the present impasse irrational, given that all the parties wanted a way out but none could find the key to unlock the blockage.

6. Rogan said that there were still old style unionists within his party who would not share power with Catholics in any circumstances, such as Willie Ross and Willie Thompson. However, he maintained that mainstream unionism has now fully accepted the principle of sharing power with Catholics, and also the need to include Sinn Féin in Government.

7. Rogan said that he had, throughout his political career, tried to extend the hand of friendship to the SDLP. In recent months, however, he had been disappointed by their failure to distance themselves from the Sinn Féin stance on decommissioning. He felt that there were major differences between the more moderate SDLP east of the Bann and the more nationalist element west of the Bann. Allen reiterated his long-held view that the problems in the

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UUP/SDLP relationship were primarily related to the influence of John Hume. We pointed out that the UUP should not take Séamus Mallon's position for granted, and that unionists had a real need to rebuild their relationship with him after the events of 15 July.

8. Rogan also placed some of the blame for the current impasse on Tony Blair. He claimed that Blair had lectured the Sinn Féin delegation at Hillsborough, waving his finger at them and saying that the IRA could never return to war. According to Rogan's sources, this had a negative effect on the Republican movement and almost precipitated a breaking of the cease-fire. It had also hardened opinion within Sinn Féin, and had probably been a factor in moving the party away from the Hillsborough formula.

9. Rogan and Allen commented favourably on their regular contacts with the Government here and the much easier relationship that now existed with Dublin. They extended an invitation to the Department to be represented at the UUP Annual Conference in Enniskillen in October. They also said that they would like to invite London Embassy officials attending the Lib/Dem and Conservative party Conferences in October to join them at the UUP receptions at these Conferences. We promised to supply them with a list, after consultation with the Embassy.

Ray Bassett

7 September 199

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