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1) Mr Drake
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Ambassador
Washington

19 September 2000

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Mandelson in Chicago, II

Further to my report yesterday, the following summarises the Secretary of State's comments at the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations last night. The theme of his address was Britain, the United States and Europe; he addressed the subject of the North in comments preceding the address and in response to a number of questions from the audience at the end.

Northern Ireland

2. Speaking to some 300 people, Mandelson said he was happy to be in Chicago, following on from Prime Minister Blair's visit a year ago. Today, we are closer to solving the Northern Ireland problem than ever before. The Agreement settles the **constitutional question**: Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom so long as that is the wish of a majority of its people (repeated for emphasis). Equality is the key: Northern Ireland's different traditions are treated equally and their aspirations are equally valued. In response to a question later, he said that the only risk regarding the US's involvement was if the US came to believe that one tradition was more important than another, or sought to put pressure on one community rather than another. Equality of treatment was the key for the US also.

3. Northern Ireland is a society slowly returning to normal. The **Policing Bill** to implement Patten amounts to the most comprehensive reform of policing in any modern country. Nationalists will be well-represented on the new Police Board which will have unrivaled powers. The name of the police force is being changed and there will be an independent recruitment agency to effect positive discrimination in favour of Catholics. Asked whether he thought the experience of the Garda Síochána, as a model of an unarmed force, was relevant to the North, he said he looked forward to an unarmed police force in Northern Ireland as soon as circumstances permitted.

4. At the same time, we cannot allow progress in these areas to hide the fact that the peace is fragile, and some sections of society have yet to catch up. There is continuing violence by Republican paramilitaries, even as the Omagh inquest continues. We must guard Northern Ireland's **security**. We will eventually succeed in drawing all parts of political life into the political process; the aim is to transform a paramilitary dominated society into a strong civic society; partnership is the key.

5. Asked about **decommissioning**, Mandelson said that this was an essential part of the Agreement and goes to the heart of people's confidence that the peace is real. Tokenism in a frozen and cynical way will undermine the peace process. Earlier this year we had had quite a crisis over the issue. Commitments on speedy decommissioning were the basis for the Executive's being formed. When they were not met he had been forced to suspend the Executive. He does not wish to see this crisis be re-sparked. Yes, the IRA have made a commitment; yes there has been one inspection, but only partial measures have been realized so far.

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"Britain, the United States and the EU"

6. Turning to his main theme, Mandelson said that his political background was that of a pro-American and an Atlanticist. He was also a pro-European - not a supporter of a federal United States of Europe - but of a union of nation-states united on the basis of common values which we share with America. He rejects both those who see no need for NATO in today's world as he rejects those who hanker after an idealized Transatlantic relationship. He poured scorn on those in the Conservative Party who suggested Britain might even join NAFTA.

7. Turning to world trade issues, Mandelson spoke strongly in favour of globalization and said that after the Presidential election a new WTO round must be called. We must learn the lessons of Seattle. To deepen globalization we need more transparent regulation of transnational capital flows. The Euro, he said, was the most significant development since Bretton Woods and will serve the interests of the Transatlantic relationship. On defence and security, he said that the EU will not be involved in collective defence, that remains the task of NATO. However, the EU can assist in certain tasks and use NATO assets as appropriate. Mandelson stated the case for the UK's special relationship with the US, saying that the UK was uniquely well-placed to act as a bridge between the US and Europe; a UK at the heart of Europe is to America's advantage.

Eamon Hickey
Consul General

cc Mr O'Ceallaign (at PMUN), Mr Ansbro, Mr Russell

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20 SEP 2000
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Ambassador
Washington

18 September 2000

Secretary of State Mandelson in Chicago

18 September 2000

The Secretary of State's visit was arranged at the initiative, I understand, of my British counterpart here, and centres around an address by him to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. The Secretary of State recorded an interview this morning with the Hagerty Show, the main Irish radio programme. He was guest of honour at a lunch hosted by the British CG and, after a number of media interviews, will deliver his address to the Council on Foreign Relations this evening. This note is based on a report to me by his interviewer this morning for the Hagerty Show, and on his comments at lunch, which I attended. Should anything of interest emerge this evening I will report further.

2. Mandelson was in relaxed form. His presentation at lunch (attended by a number of prominent Irish-American political figures and by academics) was very general in nature and to the effect that Northern Ireland has made great progress in a short space of time. He did not refer to his suspension of the institutions, only to the fact that they were working well, with people from diverse traditions working together in the Assembly and Executive. He adverted to the difficulties in keeping everybody on board in a context in which there was still considerable suspicion. The Good Friday Agreement was a remarkable achievement, but it was only a beginning - an opening of a door - not an end, and it took considerable courage for people to step through the door. He illustrated the differences in attitude to the Agreement by reference to his visit to Dublin early in his tenure, to sign the new British-Irish Agreement. While the atmosphere in Dublin had been one of celebration, he found that people in Belfast almost wished to ignore it.

3. He paid generous tribute to the role of the United States in the peace process and expressed the hope that the new administration would remain committed, noting how small a part of the world Northern Ireland was. He noted the continuing threat from extremists, recalling his recent decision to re-incarcerate a released prisoner. He spoke at greater length - and in a more pessimistic tone - about the threat from dissident Republicans. The Real IRA, he said, is growing in manpower, support and funding, some of which comes from the United States. He adverted to the frustrations of watching the people who had caused Omagh go free, even when we knew who they were. He added later that the two Governments were considering an approach to the new administration to have certain support organisations in the US named as terrorist organisations.

Policing

4. In his interview on the Hagerty Show, and at lunch, policing was main subject of discussion. In response to the interviewer's questions, I am advised that he denied attempting to split nationalists on the issue and said that the Police Bill, as regards both the symbolic and substantive issues, would meet fully the standards set by Patten. He was confident the Bill would be accepted by nationalists and, as regards strained relations with them, he indicated that this was merely politics.

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5. Mandelson spoke in similar terms at lunch, noting the complexity of police reform, its financial cost in terms of the compensation packages for retiring officers, and recalling the experience of US cities in effecting positive discrimination in their police forces.

6. I took the opportunity to support his general comments on the peace process and to note the strong support of the community in Chicago for the GFA. I noted also the importance of cooperation between the two governments as a key factor in progress thus far. On policing, I recalled in outline the government's position and that of nationalists and asked why, if the British Government's proposals were as satisfactory as he believed, there was such a divide between us on this critical issue, and asked how we might overcome this.

7. His response, addressing the last point, was: "by getting people to face facts". The British Government, he said, was implementing Patten faithfully, but some of the proposals did not require legislation. Many amendments have been made to the Police Bill already. This was a most difficult issue for many people; it was amazing how far Trimble has come compared to his initial reaction only nine months ago. If it is necessary to ensure that people are in a position to save face, then that is fine by him.

8. On the detail, he said in reply to a question as to the name of the new force that it was to be the Police Service of Northern Ireland. On the issue of symbols, he said that he didn't feel that he should be imposing a decision, that this was best referred to the new Police Board where all shades of opinion can make their views known. (Incidentally, my referring to Patten as a compromise was taken up in a slack moment by Bob Pierce of the British Embassy in Washington who described himself as having been a member of the Patten Commission. He stated that Patten was not a compromise and assured the company that this mistaken characterisation was contrary to the opinion of every member of it!).

General

9. In the radio interview, Mandelson said that a solution to the Garvaghy Road impasse lay in local bodies working together. Regarding the erosion of unionist support for the Agreement, he said that unionists felt they were giving up a great deal. He added that the nationalist community had been in deficit for many years and this needed to be made up. As to the threats to the peace process, he referred in general terms to the dangers of paramilitarism. He did not refer specifically to the issue of decommissioning. Regarding the Pat Finucane case, he referred to the current investigation by the Metropolitan Police and indicated that he was open to a thorough inquiry.

Eamon Hickey
Consul General

cc A/Sec O'Ceallaigh (at PMUN), Mr Ansbro, Mr Russell

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