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IMMEDIATE

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9 November 1996

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PST
PSS
Mr Teahan
Mr Dalton
Ann Lohan
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DISCUSSION WITH NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER

Dear Secretary

1. I had an hour's discussion this (Saturday) morning at the White House with the National Security Adviser, Tony Lake. It gave me a timely and important opportunity to take Lake through all aspects of the ceasefire discussions, and also to follow-up on the Tánaiste's discussion with him on Thursday evening.

Summary

2. Lake agrees fully - indeed emphatically - that there now exists a historic, but time-limited, opportunity to deliver a permanent ceasefire. It would be disastrous if this were not seized, and history would not in the circumstances be kind to us. All the ingredients were almost in place but, unfortunately, both Adams and Major were at present faced with similar, strategic dilemmas, related to their ability to take their constituencies forward with them.

3. At the right time, Lake said he is very willing to make the necessary telephone calls to help bring about an agreement. He had held off speaking to the British for the last ten days, and would continue to do so for the moment, in the hope that agreement could be reached in direct contact. The thrust of any message he would send would be based on an assessment of the two draft documents in the equation (i.e the British clarifying statement and the IRA ceasefire text). He would appreciate our coming back to him on

this as soon as possible.

4. Lake said he would also appreciate in due course our creative thinking on how the White House could maximise its involvement and profile if the talks moved into bilateral mode, especially with a view to reaching out to Adams and his colleagues and showing the important returns that were available to them in the right circumstances. We touched briefly on possibilities in pursuit of this.

"Scenarios"

5. We went over at considerable length the scenario to help break the present impasse which the Tánaiste had conveyed to Lake on Thursday. I emphasised in particular that this had the great advantage of giving all sides the essence of their demands, enabling Sinn Féin to secure formal entry into talks via an initial Plenary to pledge the Mitchell Principles and, through the bilaterals time-out, allowing the British and the Unionists a reasonable amount of space before facing into Plenary negotiations with Adams and his team.
6. Lake said he had no difficulty with this scenario, and hoped indeed it might be agreed. However, he found it difficult to see how Major could sign up to it, given (a) the automatic ammunition it would give the Unionists, and (b) his own vulnerable political position - made more difficult, he added, by Barry Porter's death. The British, he felt (shades of Washington 3!), had made a mistake in going public about a probationary period but, post-Lisburn, this may well reflect the reality of domestic politics there. His fear was that an interim period was now a British reality, and it would be exceptionally difficult to move them off it and back to the agreed criteria for Sinn Féin's entry.
7. This was why he had suggested to the Tánaiste the idea of Sinn Féin pledging the

Mitchell Principles before the two Governments and the Joint Chairmen, as against a full Plenary, before the talks went into bilateral mode. After we talked this through, he said he now agreed that such an approach would not offer equality of treatment to Sinn Féin and would not, therefore, do the trick. He then wondered if an alternative might run; this would (a) have the Chairmen adjourn the talks to take stock of, and assess, the new situation created by a ceasefire, and (b) at an early stage in the adjournment, have Sinn Féin pledge the Principles in the Chairmen/Government format. As there would be no Plenaries during the adjournment, Sinn Féin would find it difficult to argue they were not being given equality of treatment in being asked to pledge in a new format.

8. Again, I conveyed my concern about such an approach, which would come across as quite forced and artificial. In effect, Sinn Féin were being treated differently from the other parties, all of which had signed up to the Principles in a formal Plenary. The conversation then touched on the possibility of a further variant, with Sinn Féin pledging at a formal Plenary, but at the end of the adjournment period. However - and while I suppose one could not absolutely rule this out as an ultimate fallback position - I expressed serious reservations about it. Lake, for his part, was also somewhat dubious, and felt in particular it might hold Sinn Féin up to ransom in relation to targetting, etc., during the adjournment period, by rogue Republican elements.

Adams

9. Lake said he had spoken to Adams shortly after his meeting with you and colleagues yesterday. He had come across as "very up-beat" about the prospects for agreement. Lake used the occasion to push him hard on the need for the ceasefire statement to be couched in the most helpful and committed language. Adams said he would be passing on a text to us within a few days. (I presume he will brief Lake at that time; it would also be helpful and important that I pass the text immediately to him, ideally with our

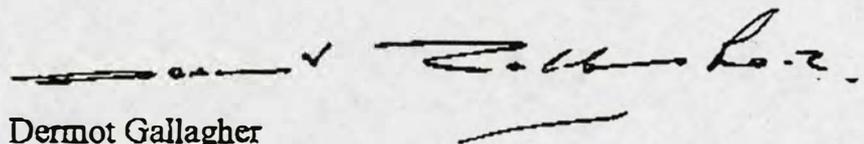
assessment. He also asked if I could fax him the latest text of our amendments to the British clarifying statement, which he has not seen. I would be grateful, therefore, if this could be faxed to me over the weekend or on Monday morning, for onward transmission).

Conclusion

10. Lake, with whom I have always had a very personable and warm relationship, was in a relaxed and weekend mood. He, however, quickly became engaged on the substance and detail of where things stand. As conveyed, he feels strongly that we have to try for the earliest possible agreement, as otherwise an historic opportunity is likely to be blown. He was encouraged by Adams' up-beat mood; he also, quite significantly, made the point that he believes Major both wants personally to deliver on an agreement, and takes the view that it would be of political benefit to him if he succeeded.
11. Lake asked me to stay closely in touch over the coming days and, in particular, to let him have our assessment of the Adams' text as soon as possible.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely



Dermot Gallagher
Ambassador

Seán Ó hUiginn Uas
Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs