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PSM: PSMS: PSSG:
Messrs. Murray, Teahon,
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Ambassadors London &
Washington: Joint Secretary:
Counsellors A-I *Mr Brangan*

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27 October 1997

**Meeting between Mr P Teahon, Secretary-General of
The Dept of the Taoiseach, and Mr Jim Steinberg of the NSC**
27 October 1997

*Mr McLaughlin
Copied to the
Taoiseach
19.10.97*

Dear Secretary

1. In the course of a visit to the U.S. Mr Teahon met at the White House with Mr Jim Steinberg of the NSC. The undersigned and Mr Larry Butler of the NSC were also present.

2. Mr Teahon updated Mr Steinberg on a number of significant recent meetings in the Anglo-Irish process. The meeting between the Taoiseach and Prime Minister Blair in Strasbourg had been very useful. He outlined the broad views of the two Prime Ministers on the three Strands, and the emphasis the Taoiseach had given to a significant role, with some executive powers, for institutions in Strand Two in order to carry a referendum in the South. Mr Teahon recounted approvingly the role played by PM Blair to date, in contrast to the end of Mr Major's incumbency. Mr Blair's relationship with Mr Trimble would be one of the key enabling factors in securing progress.

3. Mr Teahon also outlined the most recent contact with Sinn Féin at official level. Sinn Féin had been unsettled by the recent extradition application for a Maze escapee who served six years and had been living openly in the Republic for a considerable time. The ceasefire was strong and not under threat, but the lesson of the Major era was that an accumulation of individual irritants and setbacks made it difficult for the leadership to hold the line. The British system was very cumbersome in adjusting to new situations, particularly in areas such as this. Anything which could be done to improve that would

be very helpful.

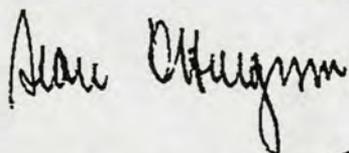
4. There was some discussion of Trimble's position. Steinberg had found him more relaxed on his last Washington visit than heretofore. The Irish side said that the Irish Government was anxious to help Trimble in every way consistent with genuine progress. Taking the pressures on him into consideration his Conference speech had been assertive in ways which did not give undue hostages to fortune or narrow the room for manoeuvre. On the other hand, now that the UUP Conference was out of the way, it was important that Trimble move to real engagement and prepare his troops for it. We hoped the U.S. would encourage this in every way open to them.
5. Steinberg asked about the "ballpark" for a deal, and particularly Strand Three. We outlined the sensitivities on both sides. There was a possibility of using the Strand Three umbrella to help the Unionists with "theology" but it was key requirement that the North/South institutions under any such umbrella should be substantive and operational in their own right. Trimble's legalistic ideal of (as Steinberg put it) a united Ireland agenda having the same relevance for someone from Scotland as for Northern Ireland would require a reversal of the position taken in the Anglo-Irish Agreement and was simply unrealistic. Mr Teahon said that Mr Trimble's agreement to strong North-South institutions would greatly increase the Irish Governments room for manoeuvre on Strand Three. Reaching the point of balance between the two aspirations needed major change. The long-term prize for Unionists was very great, but significant outreach by them was needed.
6. On the break-up of the CLMC we pointed to the looser structures on the loyalist side. We had no firm read-out on the most recent loyalist car-bomb attack, although the speculation was that it was at a personal rather than a political level.

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7. On the question of visa waivers for various Republican applicants, in some cases to attend Noraid functions, Mr Steinberg said there was a sense in the Administration that on deportees, the non-inclusion of the IRA in the terrorism list and other similar confidence building measures for nationalists they had gone close to the limits of tolerance for some Congress members. That should not be stretched gratuitously and they wanted Sinn Féin to prioritise their applications. We said that it would be unfortunate to have any "visa refusal" story at present. The Sinn Féin involvement with Noraid probably reflected a desire to win over and keep these elements within the fold rather than any dilution of commitment to the peace process.

8. The meeting concluded with a brief discussion of the visit of the First Lady, which Steinberg said was intended to signal continuing U.S. interest, which we greatly approved, and of the Taoiseach's visit, where the schedulers were still not able to give Steinberg a precise time for the Taoiseach's meeting with the President on 15 December.

Yours sincerely



Sean O'Huiginn
Ambassador

Mr Dermot Gallagher
Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division