

BY FAX.

cc: JEH.
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Dear Edward,

US/NORTHERN IRELAND

1. I mentioned to you that I would be having another round with Nancy Soderberg this morning. We covered three main topics.

TALKS

No! 2. I explained our current game-plan, and why Michael Ancram had worked on Mitchell to hold a plenary session this week as well as next. Soderberg said she thought it dangerous to leave too much to Mitchell. He was only the neutral chairman. He might be able to move things on quickly from the ritual blood-letting which was likely to take place on Monday, but his powers were limited. The local political leaders had dashed any hopes that they might exercise leader- or statesman-ship. Would it not be a good idea for the two Prime Ministers to take charge, not only of the policy but also of the talks themselves? The events of the past fortnight had done serious damage. She wondered whether the PMs might, for example, appear together once more at the talks to show how important they were, and that London and Dublin remained fully in step on the things that mattered.

SINN FEIN

3. Nancy produced her familiar pitch for re-establishing dialogue with Sinn Fein. Adams was telling her that he wanted a meeting with the Prime Minister (he was probably saying something different to Hume, who seemed to be an increasingly unreliable interlocutor). That was clearly absurd. But surely it was worth trying the option of an official level meeting under the cover of reviewing the arrangements for future marches and parades? She took my points about the political difficulty of reaching out to Sinn Fein at the present time; and agreed that there was little prospect of such an initiative helping to produce a new ceasefire. But with the talks process on the brink, and nationalist confidence badly bruised, she was sure it was worth making the effort. I said we also needed to keep the Loyalists in mind: if anyone deserved a reward, it was them. Soderberg said she agreed entirely. But the Loyalists told her they were very much in favour of HMG talking to SF.

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SMYTH

4. This is becoming a major worry for the White House, mainly for electoral reasons. Among the "stupid" promises which Clinton had made during the 1992 campaign, Soderberg reminded me (and the Irish American lobby were reminding her hourly) was a commitment that there would be "no more Joe Dohertys". Her own view was that all terrorists like Smyth should be sent back to complete their sentences. Perhaps the right answer was to get rid of him as soon as possible, once the State Department lawyers had reviewed the case. But there would be a lot of heat from the lobby. Bruce Morrison, Peter King and others had added their voices to that of the Mayor of San Francisco urging Clinton not to return Smyth to the Maze. On the other hand, the Department of Justice would be enraged if for the first time in years an extradition order was not issued in such a case. She was aware of my views from our earlier conversation - my letter of 19 July to John Holmes. (I added that I thought Clinton could be vulnerable domestically to the charge of being soft on terrorism if Smyth was not extradited. Soderberg was sceptical.) But she was now wondering, on a purely personal basis for the moment, whether we could live with a compromise whereby the Administration announced that Smyth would be extradited at the end of the 60day period (i.e. in mid-September) unless the IRA had by then restored the ceasefire. The chances of the IRA doing so were minimal (she was struck that Adams had not once mentioned Smyth or the related IRA cases to her) but at least the White House would then have political cover for getting rid of him.

5. I told Nancy that I would reflect, and report informally. We seemed to be agreed that whether or not the IRA announced a new ceasefire would have nothing to do with anyone's concern for Jimmy Smyth. We understood the domestic politics (just as she needed to understand ours). But I saw real dangers in mixing up the treatment by the courts (including the Supreme Court) of a terrorist case with the Administration's foreign policy objectives. Perhaps you, or the NIO, could let me know if there is anything else you would like me to say?

Wm W. C. C.

Peter

Peter Westmacott

cc PS/Sir Patrick Mayhew, PS/Michael Ancram, William Ehrman Esq, FCO, HM Ambassador Dublin