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by fax

British Embassy
Washington

28 June 1996

Jonathan Stephens
NIO(L)3100 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.
Washington D.C. 20008-3600Telephone: (202) 898 4264
Facsimile: (202) 898 4455

Dear Jonathan,

Prime Minister's

JCH.

NORTHERN IRELAND: US VISA FOR ADAMS?

6/28/96

1. The Times, The Sunday Times and Financial Times have been in touch over the last few days about briefings which they claim to have received from the US Embassy in London to the effect that Gerry Adams will not be granted another US visa until the IRA have renewed their cease-fire.

2. Off the record, I have taken the line that I don't believe the White House have taken a decision - and are unlikely to do so until a visa request from Adams materialises. I have pointed to the evidence that the NSC have found it useful to stay in touch with Sinn Fein since the Manchester bombing, while adding my personal view that, particularly after Dhahran and the G7 discussions in Lyon, the Administration are very unlikely, in present circumstances, to treat Adams in the same way as they did when he applied to visit the US back in March.

3. I have also had a private word with Mary Ann Peters in the NSC - who is increasingly irritated by the confused messages which appear to emanate from US Embassy briefings in London. She - and Nancy Soderberg - have confirmed to me that there is no policy at present on Adams' next visa request, and that there won't be one until there has to be. For the time being, the Administration want to keep the focus on the all-party talks and the need for a new IRA cease-fire. It might well be that the next visa request from Adams would be turned down, but that was not yet policy. Ms Peters' personal view was that, while it was possible to make a case for granting Adams a visa last time around, it was hard to see what would be achieved by doing so now.

Comment

4. We should not assume that Adams won't get a visa next time around. But I suspect that he has worked out for himself that

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Foreign Affairs

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he should not try to visit the US in present circumstances, since the risk of a rebuff - on several fronts - is real. He may first need to restore some credibility in American eyes. But, as Tom Friedman's piece in Wednesday's New York Times (copy attached) reminds us, the NSC will instinctively want to find a way of staying in touch.

Yours ever,
Peter.

Peter Westmacott

cc: D A Lamont Esq, RID, FCO
J A Dew Esq, Dublin
Edward Oakden Esq, No 10
Colin Budd Esq, Cabinet Office,
M E Pellow Esq, NAD, FCO
Andy Wood Esq, NIO(B)

What will
make the I.R.A.
face reality?

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Foreign Affairs
THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

A Time For Anger

WASHINGTON

Talking the past few days with Sinn Féin supporters in Belfast and America, it's been encouraging to see how angry they are over the I.R.A.'s latest bombing in Manchester, which injured more than 200 people. It is a particular kind of anger — the anger of people who have been too long at war, who for the first time were letting themselves believe that the future was about to bury the past, only to have the past come roaring back and smack them in the face. When I asked Senator Edward Kennedy — who helped open the dialogue between Sinn Féin, the I.R.A.'s political wing, and the U.S. — for his thoughts now, he declared: "The I.R.A. are no friends of Ireland. They are enemies of peace. No amount of I.R.A. rationalizing or dissembling can possibly justify their continuation of violence."

That anger is healthy. The more the better. Pile it on. Let 'er rip. It's the only thing that can save the Irish peace process. Because that anger is a reaffirmation that the vast majority of Irish Catholics in this country, and in Belfast, believe in the cease-fire — which held for 17 months before the I.R.A. broke it on Feb. 9 — and want to see it restored and made permanent. The I.R.A. gunmen need to taste that anger, they need to be confronted daily and ferociously with how much they are operating against the tide of their community, most of which believes the war is over. As a pro-I.R.A. city official in Belfast told a friend of mine there last week: "The one absolute truth here now is

What will
make the I.R.A.
face reality?

that nobody... advantage to war. They might have believed it before, but there is no conviction now. They will go along with it out of family ties, history and so on, but how long can you sustain a war if you don't believe in it?"

The anti-I.R.A. anger is also healthy because it underscores the degree to which the I.R.A.'s own sympathizers realize that they have been offered everything they ever wanted in a negotiating framework, and further fighting now makes absolutely no sense. The I.R.A. demanded a seat at the negotiating table for its political wing, Sinn Féin. It got it. The I.R.A. demanded that it not have to surrender its weapons immediately to enter talks. It got it. The only military sacrifice the I.R.A. has to make is to restore the cease-fire. The I.R.A. wanted the U.S. to have a formal role in the negotiations, so the Irish nationalists wouldn't be left at the mercy of the British. It got it. Former Senator George Mitchell, a man trusted by the Irish nationalists, has been allowed by Britain and the Protestants to head the all-party peace talks under way in Belfast. But the I.R.A. response was just more TNT.

So what to do next? Get angry, but don't get crazy. If we've learned anything about peace processes from South Africa to the Middle East, it is that they have a certain rhythm. Once the silent majorities decide the war is over, once they withdraw the mandate of Heaven from the gunmen, that becomes a hard fact that inexorably drives reconciliation, but not necessarily at God's speed or along an even track. Often the extremists act more desperate the more progress is achieved, because their way of life on the barricades, the only life they know, is being threatened or because they see their extremist visions being made obsolete by the peacemakers.

There is a real temptation now to sever contacts with Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin's leader, and to ban Sinn Féin from the all-party talks. That is exactly what I.R.A. extremists want, because then the public anger will be turned back at the British and Americans and not at them. No, now is the time to keep reminding Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. that the negotiating table remains open to them, but only if the I.R.A. agrees to an immediate and unconditional resumption of the cease-fire. We need Mr. Adams and Sinn Féin to be the transmitters of the public anger and to use it to win the battle — and there clearly is a battle — within the I.R.A. over whether to opt for negotiations.

The Clinton team has been right to keep its lines to Mr. Adams open. "If there were no Gerry Adams we would have to invent him," said Anthony Lake, President Clinton's national security adviser, who has been in the thick of the Irish negotiations. "We must have someone like him to bring along the man of violence. We need to turn the anger that is out there into effort, not into despair, because despair is not an option. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy."