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British Embassy
Washington

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From The Ambassador

See John,

1. In the light of Peter Westmacott's accounts (his letters of 19 and 20 July) of Nancy Soderberg's current views I thought it as well to run over the ground with Tony Lake today.
2. Lake said that he had called Adams over the weekend. His purpose had been to press for ceasefire renewal. He had told Adams that he could not understand what Sinn Fein thought they gained by holding aloof, or what reassurances about the seriousness of the talks or the openness of their agenda Sinn Fein could possibly want. Adams said that he didn't trust the British, and wanted face to face meetings in order to extract assurances. Lake had said that the time for assurances was past: when it agreed procedural/agenda documents the talks would have created firm facts, and the British were seeking to drive the process along. Adams said that he would need to be sure that decommissioning would be addressed in parallel with other issues: Lake said that this was already clear, and was being made explicit in the process from which Sinn Fein had inexplicably excluded themselves.
3. I asked Lake whether Adams had sought contact with the Administration. Lake did not answer directly, but said in terms that he had made clear to Adams that US policy had not changed: no meetings at the political level would be possible unless and until the ceasefire was restored.
4. I then talked about last week's bilateral consultations in Belfast: my reading of the records suggested that the DUP, and the UUP (ad referendum to Trimble), had been more forthcoming than before on the procedural issues. It would be important to register real progress before the August break. Lake warmly agreed (adding that he assumed it would also be important to sort out the handling of the Apprentice Boys parade).
5. Lake said that, having spoken to Adams, he thought he should now speak to Hume. He was inclined to give Paisley a miss. Whether he should talk to Trimble should perhaps depend on whether Trimble had behaved reasonably at today's

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plenary. Lake said that he planned to ring you tomorrow, for up to date advice on what he should say to Hume and perhaps Trimble.

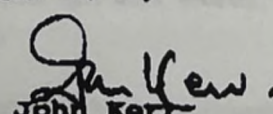
6. I then raised the Smyth case, and warned that the damage to UK perceptions of US policy would be enormous if Smyth were not sent back. Lake said that it was Christopher's call, and Christopher had 60 days to make up his mind. I said that the sooner he made it up, and put Smyth on the plane, the better. Lake demurred; there was no doubt that Smyth was an attempted murderer, but sending him back was awkward with Irish-American opinion. In a few weeks time the position would probably have eased, particularly if the Belfast talks reached procedural agreement and the Derry anniversary passed reasonably calmly. But I should not underestimate current feelings in the Irish-American lobby on the Hill: Congressmen like Neal and King, who had previously accepted that Sinn Fein had to be kept at arms length until the IRA ceasefire was restored, now argued that the world had changed, Sinn Fein must join the talks, and the Administration should talk to them and be fierce with us.

7. I said that I understood his point: my post-bag was full. But it didn't change the realities of the Smyth case. Lake repeated that this was Christopher's call, and that he thought it would be easier to do the right thing in a few week's time.

8. Lake added, in conclusion, that he had been delighted to hear of the Prime Minister's meeting with Ervine and the Loyalists. Their behaviour in recent weeks certainly deserved recognition. Perhaps they could be involved in whatever consultations now took place on the handling of the Derry anniversary.

Comment

9. This was rather more reassuring than Soderberg's line. She was present, but did not intervene.

Yours ever,

 John Kerr

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