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*Prime Minister
Another good performance
by Michael Ancram. But the
Americans would really like
us to offer him firm
- date for entry.*

*John
20/3.*

NEW YORK PLEASE PASS BIS NEW YORK.

SUBJECT: MICHAEL ANCRAM'S VISIT, 16-18 MARCH

SUMMARY

1. Administration and Congressional spokesmen confirm that Sinn Fein cannot be admitted to talks without an IRA cease-fire. (But if there were a cease-fire, US opinion would expect their early admission, eg. on 3 June.)

DETAIL

2. Michael Ancram visited Washington on 16 - 18 March for the St Patrick's Day events; had meeting with Berger, Tarnoff and, on the Hill, Senators Kennedy, Dodd and McCain and the House International Relations Committee; saw Gore at the White House reception and the Speaker's lunch; met Mitchell; conducted a wide range of press and TV interviews, and attended my lunch for Congressmen, Irish Americans and visiting Northern Ireland politicians. (There were more visitors from Northern Ireland than before: Trimble (and Taylor, Maginnis and Donaldson); Hume; Alderdice (and Bell); McCartney (and Cruise O'Brien); McWilliams (and Sagar); Curran; Ervine and (Smyth); McMichael (and White). (The DUP were not represented.) Also here was Mitchell McLaughlin of Sinn Fein, but kept out of sight: not invited to the White House, nor the Speaker's lunch, nor received in any Senate office.)

3. The main public events were two speeches by Gore and two by the Taoiseach: none caused us any problems. Gore refused to support Kennedy's call for HMG now to declare that if the IRA restored its cease-fire, Sinn Fein would be admitted to the

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talks on 3 June. Berger confirmed that it remained the Administration's view that the cease-fire would have to be unequivocal, proved in deeds as well as words.

4. The focus in all Michael Ancram's meetings was exclusively on the peace process: no-one raised MacBride, Drumcree, McAliskey, O'Callaghan, or Bloody Sunday. Everyone the Minister saw supported the call for an immediate, unequivocal IRA cease-fire. There was no pressure to let Sinn Fein into talks without a cease-fire. But if there were a cease-fire, there would of course be pressure to admit them quickly. Our position with US Congressional and public opinion is better than for many years. But brittle.

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