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BY FAX

JEH/r - it seemed to me the Americans had jumped the gun a bit on this, so I suggested the Embassy put down a gentle marker.



British Embassy
Washington

19 August 1997

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File [signature] 20/8.

Dear Anita

GERRY ADAMS'S VISA AND VISIT

1. As you know, on 14 August, Jamie Rubin (State Department spokesman) announced that a visa would be issued to Gerry Adams to allow him to visit the US in September. No fund-raising conditions would be attached. On 18 August, State telephoned me to say that later that day they were instructing the Embassy in Dublin to issue the visa.
2. After talking to No. 10 on 15 August, I protested mildly to NSC and State about the terms of the announcement. As Dr Mowlam had said, the decision was clearly for the Americans. But it was unfortunate that the lack of conditionality had been made public so early. Dr Mowlam had not yet decided whether or not the IRA ceasefire was unequivocal. The visa decision seemed to anticipate a positive decision. Unionist politicians had been quick to point out that fact. Hostile articles and editorials had appeared (notably the News Letter and Daily Express).
3. Mary Ann Peters pointed out that Adams was not coming until September by which time it was expected the Secretary of State would have pronounced on the ceasefire: "If Dr Mowlam finds it is not unequivocal, we would have to do something". They had considered a two-stage announcement (visa first, conditions later) but concluded that such a novel process would have given Adams two positive news stories. In any case, the way the visa regime was set up meant that conditions could only be applied at the time a visa was issued. Ms Peters waxed eloquent on the strengths of the FBI monitoring system for funds raised. In

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order to save themselves a lot of trouble, Friends of Sinn Fein had agreed to FBI access to their records which the FBI had no right to demand. The FBI knew how much had been raised, from whom and how the money was spent: they had access to the bank records of the special account in Dublin to which FOSF transferred US cash. Ms Peters also assured me that Adams would be received at no higher level than Sandy Berger on this visit: there was no question of Presidential involvement (but, as Adams tells journalists, Clinton will be on holiday) and her strong recommendation was against Vice Presidential involvement.

4. On the Hill, there is greater pressure for top-level meetings. Gardner Peckham (Speaker Gingrich's foreign policy adviser) 'phoned today to warn me that "it was very likely that Gingrich would meet Adams on 3 or 4 September". I tried to steer Peckham away from a meeting: the second ceasefire was just a few weeks old, it seemed a little early to reward Adams with such a high-profile meeting; as far as I knew, the Speaker had not had a one-to-one meeting with Mr Trimble or any Unionist leader, it would seem very odd for the Speaker to begin his dialogue with Northern Ireland party leaders with Sinn Fein, a minority party within the minority community, which enjoyed half the support of the UUP; no matter how strong a message Mr Gingrich delivered to Mr Adams (and we hoped there would be a strong message in support of the principle of consent and decommissioning and the importance of compromise) the fact of the meeting was what was likely to make headlines rather than the substance; lastly, if the Speaker saw Adams, all other party leaders would expect their own one-to-one meetings with him, if Gingrich refused (for whatever reason) he would be roundly criticised in Northern Ireland. Peckham acknowledged the case against an early meeting. But admitted that the politics were strongly in favour. Gilman (who was acting if Adams deserved a ticker-tape parade) was lobbying hard. The Speaker could not ignore the chairman of an important committee and the views of the New York delegation. We should expect a meeting, although Peckham promised to make the case against.

Yours ever

S G McDonald

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