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14/12 NS

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From: Edward Oakden

Date: 14 December 1995

RODERIC LYNEcc: Christopher Meyer
Arabella Warburton**NORTHERN IRELAND**

As agreed, I talked through the various programme options with John Chilcot this morning.

He tabled outline programme 1 (attached). This has a nice balance of one element each for the three main political persuasions, albeit of a non-political, Christmassy nature: Ballymena (DUP), North Belfast (UUP) and Downpatrick (SDLP).

To this, he said Paddy Mayhew recommended including a business oriented event. He suggested the official opening of the North City Business Enterprise Park, in which IDB have been involved, instead of the Chamber of Commerce carol service. That would still give you the North Belfast element, but save two sets of carol singing, which seemed fair enough.

I asked if the Church leaders could be involved in the programme in some way, perhaps by inviting them to participate in some carol singing: there was no need for a separate meeting necessarily. The Prime Minister might thereby implicitly support their positive statement just before the Clinton visit.

Chilcot said that Paddy Mayhew advised firmly against this. It would look fringe-political, and would not be Christmassy. Because each of the locations were

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associated with a political persuasion, it would be awkward inviting those of the opposite persuasion, eg Cardinal Daly to Ballymena. I asked for two options: one programme with a Church element, one without.

The NIO also wondered if the Prime Minister might fly directly from Downpatrick to Dublin by helicopter. I said this would depend on whether the time saved was sufficient to offset the greater vulnerability to the weather. NIO's subsequent researches show that we should stick with a plane departure from Aldergrove.

The NIO have this evening sent us outline programme 2, which incorporates the North Belfast event and a 20 minute meeting with Church leaders in the margins of the business event. It drops the visit to Downpatrick altogether.

Taking you through the individual elements in turn:

- Ballymena: good strong Protestant country. Paisley's home town - but low likelihood of demonstrations (see NIO covering note). Good Mayor. Local economy has recovered in the last year.

Council offices are a slightly odd place to sing school carols, but are I suppose OK. So, subject to the Tecs' advice, is the walkabout in Ballymena shopping area with the Mayor afterwards. But do we need a courtesy call on the Mayor (even if only 10 minutes) to start with? Could this not be dropped and the PM meet the Mayor at the carols?

- Lunch at St Patricks Barracks: the one security-focused event. A small, shortish lunch to allow a frank discussion with the GOC and Chief Constable of security in the post-ceasefire environment. Good to show the security forces that they remain central to our thinking, despite the ceasefires and reduction of military numbers.

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- North Belfast: feeling left out, as the only quarter of the city not to be visited by Clinton. Mood a bit fraught. Local MP Cecil Walker (UUP). The opening of the Enterprise Park seems a good sort of event, showing the practical consequences of the peace.
- Meeting with Church Leaders: very odd to have only 20 minutes with these august people, in the margins of the business conference. In practice it would not work. If they really cannot be invited to the carol service, we may have to drop them. If it would help to include them, the Prime Minister might attend the carol service in North Belfast rather than at Ballymena (and would then need to lunch in North Belfast too).
- Downpatrick: a pity to lose the Catholic-related element altogether. It takes 15 minutes to reach by helicopter. But if necessary other parts of the programme could be shaved, eg by dropping the courtesy call on the Mayor and spending 10 minutes less at the business conference, and generally compressing the morning, as the NIO did in outline programme 1. This would make the programme tighter. But it would introduce more balance.

Grateful for your views asap on which elements appeal. I attach behind one possible variant taking these points into account. If you would like to explore further the option of concentrating the carols where the Church leaders might find it easier to attend, I will go back to the NIO and ask them to rejig accordingly. Having the four Church leaders attend a carol service together would be a powerful symbol, post-Clinton visit, if it could be brought off. But I just don't know how realistic this is: not very, I suspect.

(Edward).

EDWARD OAKDEN

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1030 Arrive RAF Aldergrove
1050 Arrive Ballymena Council Offices for carol singing with local schoolchildren
1120 Walkabout in main shopping area of Ballymena with the Mayor
1150-1245 Lunch with RUC and Army at St Patricks Barracks, Ballymena
1250 Depart Ballymena by helicopter
1300 Arrive Girdwood Barracks HLS North Belfast. Transfer to cars
1315-1345 Official opening of North City Business Enterprise Park
1400 Depart North Belfast
1420-1500 Arrive Downpatrick: children's Christmas party at Down Museum
1505 Depart Downpatrick
1525 Arrive RAF Aldergrove
1530-1545 Press conference at Jet Centre
1550 Depart RAF Aldergrove

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