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Strictly Confidential

9 April 1985

Mr Bernard Davenport
Anglo-Irish Section
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin, Ireland

Dear Bernard:

I have had a meeting at his request with Mr Brian Atwood, Executive Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI) for International Affairs (background note on organization attached). There have been contacts over the past three months during their respective visits to the USA between John Hume, Seamus Mallon, Dennis Haughey and Mr Atwood. The SDLP has sought assistance from NDI and the attached project proposal (confidential) has been prepared.

As you will see, the NDI offers technical rather than political assistance and would try to help the SDLP in establishing a more efficient organization with professionally trained personnel. Initially, a feasibility study will be carried out on the ground after the May elections by three experts selected by NDI. This would be followed by the establishment of an "SDLP Institute" through which the funding and other assistance would be channelled. Mr Atwood stressed that the NDI wished to avoid publicity and work in the background as much as possible. They do not want to become embroiled in the politics of NI but to offer professional and technical assistance through the "SDLP Institute". It is unclear at this stage the precise funding that will be made available to the SDLP in addition to purely technical and professional advice.

The purpose of his conversation with me was to try and confirm that there would be no objection to the project from the Irish Government. I was positive in my remarks on the project and said that I would seek the reaction of my authorities. I would appreciate an early reaction from you on the positive approach that I have taken with Mr Atwood.

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Mr Atwood will travel to NI to observe the local elections from 13 to 15 May. He would like, if it is feasible, to call on the Secretary on the afternoon of 16 May. If the Secretary is not available, perhaps someone in the Anglo-Irish Section could see him.

The British authorities will be informed of the project at a later stage probably when Mr Atwood visits London on 17 May.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Burke

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PROJECT PROPOSAL

NORTHERN IRELAND -- SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY -- PARTY BUILDING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SDLP is the sole nationalist, Catholic, political grouping in Northern Ireland to reject violence and insist upon the peaceful resolution, by democratic processes, of the issues which separate nationalist and Unionist, Catholic and Protestant. Its leader, John Hume, has already made a major contribution to his Party's purpose in the New Ireland Forum -- an initiative commended by the United States Congress in a Joint Resolution passed in May 1984.

The SDLP requested NDI assistance orally on January 10 and February 21, 1985; written confirmation is anticipated. It has been made clear to the SDLP leadership that NDI can give no assistance in election campaigns, and that NDI assistance, although it manifests solidarity of democratic beliefs, is, within that framework, technical rather than political, involving such fields as organizational development, constituent services, civic education, and financial management.

RECOMMENDATION: A feasibility study, to be undertaken after the May 1985 local elections in Northern Ireland, followed by assistance in the establishment of an SDLP Institute, with which NDI could work directly in providing two training workshops for SDLP leaders and potential leadership. Evaluation and assessment will be undertaken at six-months intervals. Funding will come partially from the current allocation for Model Workshops in Democratic Development; the remainder to be raised from foundations and corporations.

This project offers not only a first step in developing a relationship with the SDLP, but also the potential for wider opportunities to promote peaceful development of democratic processes and institutions in Northern Ireland.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY OF NORTHERN IRELAND:

Background: The SDLP, founded in August 1970, grew less out of the rising tide of dramatic developments which by the late 1960's were gradually engulfing the institutions of Protestant domination in Northern Ireland, than out of the fragmentation of nationalist, sectarian, and socialist groupings which were, in their variety, unable effectively to serve the political and civic needs of the minority Catholic population. The Party's founders came from the old Nationalist Party, the National Democratic Party, the Republican Labour Party, the Northern Ireland Labour Party (itself a non-sectarian grouping, aimed at adherents of British socialism), and Catholic members of the Ulster Parliament who had been active in the civil rights movement of the 1960's. The result was an organization which spoke, and still speaks, for the majority of Catholics in Northern Ireland. While hewing to its socialist ties and background (the Party is a member of the Socialist International and the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Community), the Party's prominence today is almost entirely due to its stewardship of the interests of the Catholic minority and, simultaneously, its rejection of violence, both Catholic and Protestant, and its active commitment to resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland by peaceful and democratic procedures, processes, and institutions. It was originally presented (in the words of W. D. Flackes, longtime observer of Northern Ireland politics, in his classic Northern Ireland: A Political Directory), "as a radical, left-of-centre party, which would seek civil rights for all and just distribution of wealth. It would work to promote friendship and understanding between North and South, with a view to the eventual unity of Ireland, through the consent of the majority of the people, North and South." The Party has persevered in this image, but the major issues of survival in Northern Ireland itself, of conciliation between North and South, of British sovereignty, have perforce relegated purely domestic aims and aspirations to the second rank. This has not meant any abandonment of the essential democratic aims of the Party. On the contrary: the SDLP withdrawal in July 1971 from the Northern Ireland Parliament which had sat at Stormont, outside Belfast, since 1921 -- the Party's withdrawal of its consent from the institutions of government, as it was put -- was a major step leading ultimately to recognition the following year by the British Government and Parliament that the distribution of power in Northern Ireland was neither democratic nor effective.

Leadership: Of the seven founders of the SDLP, one -- Senator Paddy Wilson -- was murdered. Two others -- reflecting perhaps a basic tension between the political and social aims of the Party under the relentless pressure of fifteen years of terrorism -- have left the Party for other fields: Paddy Devlin, formerly of the Irish Labour Party, then Chairman of the Northern Ireland Labour Party 1967-68, was expelled from the SDLP in 1977 when he asserted the Party was diluting the socialist content of

its policy -- a longtime trade unionist, he became full-time district secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in 1976 and two years later launched the United Labour Party; the immediate cause for the departure from the Party of Gerard Fitt, its first leader (now, as the recipient of a Life Peerage in 1983, Lord Fitt), was disagreement over the Party's refusal to participate in the British-organized Constitutional Convention of 1979; what he said at the time, however, was that the Party was becoming less Socialist and "more green Nationalist." The four other founders, John Hume, Austin Currie, Ivan Cooper, and Paddy O'Hanlon, continue in the Party leadership, with varying personal fortunes (all participated in senior status in the power-sharing arrangements of 1974; but the electoral candidacies of the four have not all met with success).

In 1979 Fitt was succeeded as Party leader by John Hume, widely acknowledged to be one of Northern Ireland's most skilful politicians. Hume, in his late forties, is a charismatic leader, and his electoral fortunes reflect his wide appeal: a former M. P. at Stormont (he ousted the Nationalist leader Edward McAteer in the 1969 election), he is since 1979 an elected member of the European Parliament (he polled more votes than the two Official Unionist candidates in that election), since 1982 an elected member of the Northern Ireland Assembly (in which the SDLP does not sit), and since 1983 a Member of Parliament at Westminster -- the first time since the establishment of Northern Ireland that a non-Unionist gained in the Londonderry area a seat at Westminster. Hume's leadership is inspiring, his political skill uncontested (he recently caused a furor by offering, on a BBC talk show, to meet with the IRA Council, an offer quickly taken up by the IRA; as the press speculated whether Hume had at last been hoodwinked, he met with the IRA Council for exactly five minutes, walking out on their demand that the meeting be videotaped), his ideas reasonable and productive. The fact is, however, that under his leadership there is a lack of depth in the party organization.

When John Hume became Party leader in 1979, Seamus Mallon succeeded to the post of deputy leader. Mallon, a year older than Hume, is from County Armagh, one of the strife-torn areas of Northern Ireland. He achieved prominence in the civil rights campaign of the 1960's. He represented Armagh in the 1973 Assembly, in which he was also chairman of the SDLP delegation. From 1977 to 1979 he was chairman of the Party's constituency representatives. Mallon was elected to the 1982 Assembly, but was subsequently disqualified, on a challenge by the Official Unionist Assembly member and M.P. for Armagh, on the grounds that he was a Senator of the Irish Republic (he had been appointed in June 1982 by Charles Haughey during the latter's brief second term as Taoiseach). He is a recent visitor to the United States under the USIA Visitor's Program.

Denis Haughey, just 40 years of age, and a native of County Tyrone -- another of Northern Ireland's hot spots -- is an Honors graduate of

Queen's University Belfast in political science and modern history. Active in the civil rights movement, he joined the SDLP on its formation, and was Chairman, 1973-78. Unsuccessful in two Westminster elections, he became full-time assistant to John Hume in the latter's work as Member of the European Parliament. He is the SDLP delegate to the Socialist International, and to the Bureau of the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Community. He is also International Secretary of the SDLP.

Significance of the SDLP to the Democratization Process: Direct Rule of Northern Ireland from Westminster, whatever the democratic safeguards inherent in that procedure, does not substitute for local democratic institutions. Nor do the British claim that it does: its justification is the failure of the Stormont Parliament to protect minority rights in the province, and the subsequent strife and disorder. Successive British Governments, since Stormont was prorogued, have sought to introduce varying forms of democratic institutions into the Northern Ireland political scene -- all without success. The seventeen M. P.'s who represent Northern Ireland at Westminster, in a House of Commons of 650 Members, cannot be said to provide effective representation of the province -- even if they were in full agreement on anything, which of course they are not. The prevailing situation, therefore, whatever blame may be assessed for its origins (and they go far back in history, and deep into the human psyche) is notable for the absence of local democratic institutions within which the local pressures and conflicts can be absorbed and resolved. The result is confrontation, continuing violence, and the constant threat of violence.

There is a political spectrum in Northern Ireland (dotted by contradiction and spotted by paradox) which runs through the roughly million Protestants (spread among fifty-five sects) and roughly half-million Catholics. (These are the figures currently in general use; in fact, however, there are demographic changes under way which will, if they continue their present trend, markedly increase the proportion of Catholics in the population). The spectrum runs from the Provisional Sinn Fein, the political arm of the Provisional IRA -- the latter outlawed in both the South and North for their unrelenting violence -- at the far end of the Catholic side of the spectrum; through the SDLP; on to the Alliance, a party founded in 1970 which drew support from some moderate members of the Official Unionist Party and former members of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, and which seeks support -- not too successfully -- from both Protestants and Catholics; to the largest party, the Official Unionist Party, staunchly Protestant and loyalist; thence to the Democratic Unionist Party, the followers of the Rev. Ian Paisley; and beyond the DUP, but a stone's throw, and in the same shadows that hide the Provisional IRA, are the Protestant paramilitary bands.

Belief is important in this spectrum -- and so is size. To give an idea of the comparative weights involved, it is worth looking at the

results of the last two elections in Northern Ireland (in both the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland the Proportional Representation-Single Transferable Vote [PR-STV] system -- which favors minorities, and was introduced into Northern Ireland by the British in 1973 -- is used; the formulae it employs are too complicated to reproduce here): in the 1982 elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, in which there was only a 60 per cent turnout, the PSF polled 10.1% of the vote, and took 5 seats; the SDLP 18.8% and 14 seats; the Alliance 9.3% and 10 seats; the OUP polled 29.7% and received 26 seats; and the DUP 23% and 21 seats. In the 1983 elections for Westminster, 72.8 per cent of the electorate voted: 13.4% for the Provisional Sinn Fein, who received 2 seats; 17.9% for the SDLP, for 1 seat; 8% for the Alliance, and no seats; 34% for the OUP, who received 11 seats; 20% for the DUP, with 3 seats -- with an additional seat going to a Unionist splinter party, for a total of 15 Unionist seats.

The point here is not the electoral fortunes of the SDLP, but the clear demonstration that on the Catholic side the SDLP is the sole effective bulwark against Catholic terrorism. Indeed, the Party is squeezed between the fact of Catholic terrorism and Unionist obduracy, with both the fact and the menace of Protestant terrorism to reinforce that obduracy. It nevertheless persists in its effort to provide a democratic outlet for Catholic aspirations, and democratic institutions to replace Direct Rule. It has manifested its fidelity to these aims on numerous occasions: it was the SDLP which joined with Brian Faulkner's Unionists and the Alliance in the Sunningdale Conference of 1973, to agree on effective power-sharing in a Northern Ireland Executive -- an initiative of great promise which collapsed in the face of loyalist strikes. Again, in 1979, the SDLP stood by the principle of power-sharing, at the cost of internal disruption and the loss of the Party's original leader. Two years later, the SDLP faced up to the direct challenge of the Provisional Sinn Fein, who sought to rout the Party against the backdrop of the hunger strikes at the Maze Prison, and maintained their support in the Catholic community. Repeatedly, the SDLP has insisted that the broader dimensions of the Northern Ireland problem be recognized, its major initiative in this area being the New Ireland Forum, a 1983 convocation to consult "on the manner in which lasting peace and stability could be achieved in a new Ireland through the democratic process..." which was "open to all democratic parties which reject violence and which have members elected or appointed..." to the Parliament of the Irish Republic and the Northern Ireland Assembly. In short, the SDLP is the only nationalist and Catholic grouping in Northern Ireland which seeks to resolve the troubles of that tortured land within a democratic framework and by democratic processes.

COUNTRY ANALYSIS

The Political Situation: Behind the partisan divisions of Northern Ireland stand, of course, the international realities of the situation.

They are, quite simply, that Northern Ireland is under the sovereignty of the British Crown, and the province is, at the same time, a major factor in the concerns and policy of the Irish Republic. The United States maintains, as a matter of priority, intimate relations with both countries. It would not be possible, therefore, for NDI to enter into effective relations with the SDLP without informing both the British and Irish Governments of the fact and intent of the relationship. Although the aims and interests of the two Governments in Northern Ireland do not coincide, they both stand fast behind the principle of -- and are even anxious for -- a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Obviously, the Irish Government would look more benignly on the relationship -- but this is not to say that the British Government would take a hostile view: the Party leader is, after all, a duly elected member of the House of Commons, and the British authorities recognize as readily as anyone, even if they disagree on specific details, that the aims of the SDLP with respect to democratic institutions and processes in Northern Ireland coincide broadly with their own.

Geopolitical Significance: It would be difficult to pinpoint another place at the heart of the Western world where continuing strife and violence, and the consequent absence of viable democratic institutions, poses more long-run menace for United States interests than Northern Ireland. The problem cannot be allowed to adversely affect this country's relations with either the United Kingdom or the Irish Republic -- nor, it might be added, with our allies in the European Community, who, if the situation should deteriorate markedly, might well take a greater rather than lesser interest in the problem. Nor can we allow a resolution of the problem which would adversely affect our vital strategic interests in the area. To this must be added the special feature of the Northern Ireland problem, to wit, the existence of a very large Irish population in these United States, a goodly proportion of whom take an active, some even a passionate, interest in the problem of Northern Ireland. The historical ties have other concomitants: during the past two decades U. S. investment in Ireland, both North and South, has played a large role in the expansion and modernization of Irish industry. At the end of 1982 U. S. investment in Ireland totalled more than \$3 billion.

ADMINISTRATION POLICY:

A statement by President Reagan on St. Patrick's Day 1984 emphasized continued condemnation of terrorism and violence, and cautioned American recipients of appeals for aid to groups in Northern Ireland to ensure that such aid does not end up, either directly or indirectly, in the hands of those who perpetrate violence. The President also pledged to maintain the U. S. commitment to facilitate the growth of job-creating investment in both the North and South of Ireland. The Administration's policy, as represented by the Department of State, encourages all groups involved in the affairs of Northern Ireland that have "reconciliation" as their goal. There is no advocacy of any

specific solution (integration, unification, devolution, etc.). Although the Department expresses uncertainty about the future of the SDLP, and has questions about John Hume's organizational capacities, they recognize that the SDLP is squeezed between the IRA and the Unionists, and that the Party's inadequate organization, and its absence at the local level where needed, impede its ability to achieve its democratic aims. The Department would have no objections to assistance to the SDLP in local level organization, and in improving constituent and electoral techniques.

DOMESTIC POLICY

Congressional Reaction: "The Friends of Ireland" in the Congress, which includes most notably the Speaker of the House, the Majority Whip of the House, and Senators Kennedy and Moynihan (all of whom favor unification -- with consent, of course -- of Ireland) are enthusiastic supporters of John Hume and the SDLP. There is another group in the Congress -- the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs, headed by Congressman Mario Biaggi, representing the Nineteenth District of New York -- which also supports unification, but which, while condemning violence, has close ties to known American supporters of Provisional Sinn Fein and the IRA. A particular feature of this group, however, is that its chief impetus frequently gives the appearance of being more anti-British than pro-any particular Irish faction. In any event, since the sympathies of the Ad Hoc Committee are nationalist and Catholic, it is doubtful that they would take a position against technical assistance for the SDLP.

Of greater importance is the support of the House leadership and of key Senators for the SDLP. On May 22, 1984, the House of Representatives considered a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the participants in the New Ireland Forum "are to be commended for their efforts to bring about genuine progress in the search for a just and peaceful solution to the problems of Northern Ireland." The resolution had been introduced by Congressmen Donnelly of Massachusetts and Foley of Washington, and the motion was made by Congressman Fascell. A number of Congressmen spoke in support of the resolution -- including Representative Biaggi, who added an expression of regret that "some important and legitimate segments of political thought in Northern Ireland" had been excluded from the consultations. Congressman Michel, the Minority Leader, had earlier spoken in favor of the motion. No one spoke against, and the motion passed 417-0, with 16 Members abstaining. The resolution was introduced into the Senate the same day by Senator Kennedy, speaking for Senators Moynihan, Dodd, Hatch, Boschwitz, Dixon, Pell, Proxmire, Sarbanes, and himself. On May 24, during consideration of the resolution, Senators Durenberger, Heinz, Glenn, Mitchell, Cranston, and Bradley were included as co-sponsors. There were no speakers against the resolution, and after the third reading it was passed.

RECOMMENDATION

The foregoing suggests that the SDLP occupies a strategic ground in the peaceful and democratic resolution of the problem of Northern Ireland. Many assets accompany the idea of NDI technical assistance to the SDLP: a probably benign outlook on the activity by the British, Irish, and United States Governments; important and productive United States Congressional support; the possibility of a valuable contribution in a key strategic area; an activity with important domestic political significance. The liability is the organizational weaknesses of the SDLP. However, it is precisely those weaknesses that NDI assistance is intended to act upon.

Accordingly, it is recommended that a feasibility study be undertaken, on the ground in Northern Ireland, following the May local elections. This would constitute Phase I of the project. If Phase I indicates the feasibility of further action, the project would proceed to Phase II, the establishment by the SDLP of an Institute with which the NDI could work directly. This would involve legal advice to the SDLP for establishment of the Institute, plus direct advice from NDI as to the desiderata for the new organization. With the Institute in place, the project would proceed to Phase III, consisting of two training workshops for SDLP leaders and potential leadership. The workshops would be held in the Washington area, and would concentrate on organizational development, constituent services, civic education, and financial management. Evaluation and assessment would take place at six-months intervals, the final evaluation assessing the work of the SDLP Institute and the need for further assistance.

Funding will come partially from the current allocation for Model Workshops in Democratic Development. Additional funds are to be raised from foundations and corporations.

The prospects underlying this project have to do not only with the future role of the SDLP in the peaceful construction of democratic institutions in Northern Ireland. It would offer, of course, a valuable first step in developing a relationship with the SDLP. It would also, however, provide a springboard for potential further opportunities to promote the peaceful development of democratic processes and institutions in Northern Ireland.