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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 11, 1998

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INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER *W*

SUBJECT: Irish Press Response to Ambassador Seitz's Attack on Your Northern Ireland Policy

Ray Seitz, American Ambassador to the United Kingdom during your first years as President, published his memoirs last month in London. A treacly treatise on things English as seen by a sympathetic American, excerpts which appeared in the British press featured a section that attacked you and your policy team on Northern Ireland in the context of the decision to give Gerry Adams a visa in 1994. He also attacked Jean Kennedy Smith and accused the White House of leaking British intelligence to the IRA.

Press reaction in Ireland, north and south, generally supported White House policy, born out by positive developments in the peace process. The independent Irish Times, Ireland's second largest daily, published an editorial sharply critical of former Ambassador Seitz, who retired in 1994 and lives in London. Former Irish Times Washington correspondent and author Conor O'Clery also contributed a supporting op-ed feature based on his favorable book on your Irish policy.

Jean is reportedly contemplating a libel suit against the London-based Sunday Telegraph, which carried the excerpted memoirs; she has three years to take action and may wait until after she resigns from her position. As you may be aware, British and Irish libel laws are weighted towards the plaintiff with the losing party picking up the legal tab.

Attachment

Tab A "Undiplomatic Language," Irish Times editorial, January 21, 1998

cc: Vice President  
Chief of Staff

0465

# THE IRISH TIMES

ON THE WEB

FRONT IRELAND FINANCE WORLD FEATURES SPORT OPINION LETTERS  
OPINION Wednesday, January 21, 1998

## Undiplomatic Language

Irish and British to outline council's powers

Blair may stall on Bloody Sunday inquiry

Would-be destroyers of talks mustn't succeed - Ahern

Murdered man's sister appeals for no retaliation

Govts hope North-South paper will bring impetus to talks

Adams accuses UDA and LVF of joint killings

Sovereignty group to oppose 'any partitionist settlement'

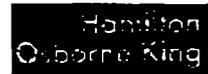
Loyalists fear links between

Diplomacy, amongst other things, is the art of presenting oneself as perpetually on the winning side - an essential part of Ambrose Bierce's definition: "The patriotic art of lying for one's country". A stern realism underlies such established codes of practice. National interests are assumed to be served by policies that succeed, just as are individual diplomatic careers.

In the light of these realities the decision of the former United States Ambassador to the Court of St James, Mr Raymond Seitz, to go public with his scathing criticisms of his former colleague, the US Ambassador to Ireland, Mrs Jean Kennedy Smith, and of President Clinton has puzzled many people on both sides of the Atlantic, both as to substance and timing. He accuses them of breaching long-standing US opposition to terrorism when the decision was made in February 1994 to grant a visa to the president of Sinn Féin, Mr Gerry Adams. It is presented as a capitulation to the Irish-American lobby by a gullible and amateurish White House, an ambassador "too shallow to understand the past and too naive to anticipate the future" and an egregious and damaging blow to the Anglo-American special relationship. He even accuses White House personnel of



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Brendan Behan (1923-1964)

Wednesday, January 21, 1998: OPINION

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links between

UDA passing on intelligence to Sinn Féin.

dissidents and

LVF

In the extracts from his autobiography published in the Sunday Telegraph Mr

White House

rejects charges  
by Seitz

Seitz says "the quid for the Adams visa never produced its quo", in that Mr Adams never renounced terrorism, demanded and

Hume accuses

Seitz of

ignorance  
about North  
situation

got more concessions and saw his stature "immeasurably enhanced" in Washington. He plays down the IRA ceasefire of August 1994 and the current one accompanying the political negotiations as merely tactical.

Opinion:

Ceasefire at  
risk if  
concessions  
aren't made

Mrs Kennedy Smith's dignified response is appropriately low-key, but nonetheless to the point. "Let the peace process speak for itself. The fact is that the party talks are under way and the outlines of a potential

Opinion:

Clinton's  
arrival marked  
change in  
North policy

settlement are being discussed. The parties themselves have taken primary credit for this, but I think history will record that President Clinton and his administration have played a major part". As Mr Albert Reynolds has put it, "we had to prove that politics worked, worked better than violence and produced better results". The historical record shows that Mr Clinton made his important decision to grant the visa only after consulting a formidable range of political heavyweights in and around his administration. Mr Reynolds, Mr John Hume and other senior Irish representatives played a full part, as did his ambassador in Dublin, who herself was convinced the visa should be issued only after similar representations. The Major government came on board after the ceasefire, and so has its Labour successor.

In Washington, the administration has firmly supported Mrs Kennedy Smith and officials such as Mr Anthony Lake and Ms Nancy Soderberg who were maligned by Mr Seitz. Mr Lake has convincingly

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dismissed the allegation that British security information was passed to the IRA. In Dublin, it is pointed out that Mr Seitz was appointed by a Republican president, Mrs Kennedy Smith by a Democratic one. The London circles which Mr Seitz has made his own still harbour deep suspicion and hostility towards the Kennedy family. But Mrs Kennedy Smith has proved to be one of the most canny, effective and successful US ambassadors to Ireland.

A final verdict on the US involvement (which has anyway always been more facilitating than mediating) will necessarily await the outcome of the peace process, now at probably its most sensitive moment. But from here Mr Seitz's criticisms look like those of someone who lost the argument and, ungraciously as well as undiplomatically, cannot forget that he did so.

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