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From: H

Sent: 10/1/2012 2:00:16 AM +00:00

To: Oscar Flores [redacted]

Subject: Fw: Piece in Irish Central today, Irish voice tomorrow

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Pls print two copies.

----- Original Message -----

From: Penn Rhodeen [mailto:[redacted]]
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2012 11:11 AM
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Subject: Piece in Irish Central today, Irish voice tomorrow

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Mitt Romney says Palestinian/Israeli conflict is not possible to solve
Thankfully, Bill Clinton didn't say the same about Northern Ireland

By PENN RHODEEN, IrishCentral Contributing Writer

Published Tuesday, September 25, 2012, 7:23 AM Updated Tuesday, September 25, 2012, 10:11 AM

Although most of the talk about Mitt Romney's infamous Boca Raton video has focused on what he said about the 47% of Americans he claims won't take responsibility for their lives, his comments on the Mideast also say a lot about the kind of president he would be.

Romney said straight out that the situation between Israel and the Palestinians, "is going to remain an unsolved problem." His remarkable confession of defeat on the Mideast, an abject no mas even before getting himself in the ring, sounds eerily like what many said not too long ago about another seemingly insoluble problem: the centuries old warfare in Northern Ireland.

There was in Ireland and Britain an abundance of sage advice that the most that could be hoped for was to maintain the violence at a tolerable level and otherwise muddle through and hope for generational change.

But that most intractable of bloody conflicts—whether measured from the start of the Troubles in the 1960s, or the Battle of Boyne 300 years earlier (when the Catholic James II was defeated in his effort to retake the British throne), or the initial British invasions of Ireland over 800 years ago—did not, in fact, "remain an unsolved problem."

After years of efforts to get and keep ceasefires and months of painstaking negotiations, permanent peace was made on Good Friday, 1998; it has flourished and withstood all manner of difficult tests. Next spring it will be 15 years and there is no meaningful constituency for going back to the old battles.

Not only did the eternal combatants move from a path of war to a path of politics, but they accomplished a rare sort of peace: not defeat, not humiliation, not ethnic cleansing, but instead the creation of a new civil society that accommodates both of its populations. Overall, it stands as one of the greatest political and diplomatic accomplishments in history.

In light of Romney's remarks, it is interesting to recall that the United States played a major role in bringing about the peace in Northern Ireland. That history flies in the face of Romney's defeatism and forces this question: should an American president ever, without even trying, give up on all possibility of the United States helping bring about a solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians?

The question is especially compelling in light of the enormous, and quite possibly decisive, help that Bill Clinton was able to give to the peace process in Northern Ireland.

Although the story of that peace process, or just the American role, or even just the festival of incomprehension and mistaken assumptions underlying Romney's analysis, are tales far too long for full telling in this space, a short version is worth recalling.

Clinton became involved in the issue of Northern Ireland during the 1992 presidential campaign at the behest of former congressman Bruce Morrison, his Yale Law School classmate, and many Irish American activists.

As he later said his daughter Chelsea concluded after researching her thesis on Northern Ireland, he was first drawn in by the politics—many of our nearly 50 million Irish Americans vote Irish but nobody much votes British—but as his involvement moved forward he became utterly captivated by the prospect of helping bring about an historically great accomplishment, a genuine advance for humankind.

In taking bold steps like granting a visa to Gerry Adams, leader of the Sinn Fein Party, always described as the “political arm of the outlawed Irish Republican Army,” Clinton stood down vehement opposition of the British government, the FBI and the State Department.

In the face of terrible violence he kept his eyes on the prize of winning the peace. (Clinton was, of course, unstinting in denouncing the violence, most notably during his triumphant visit to Belfast, when he declared to the “men of violence” that their day was over.)

To be sure, Clinton didn’t—and certainly couldn’t—win the peace by himself. There were indispensable contributions by American activists including Bruce Morrison and Irish American publisher Niall O’Dowd, Ted Kennedy and others in Congress, Gerry Adams and John Hume from Northern Ireland, Irish prime ministers including Albert Reynolds and Bertie Ahearn and then-newly-elected British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

When true all-party talks began at last, George Mitchell presided with a brilliant combination of patience and much needed decisiveness. And beyond that, more and more people of both communities in Northern Ireland spoke the truth that a life permeated by so much violence—during the thirty years of the Troubles, nearly 3500 were killed, a proportionate equivalent to nearly 500,000 in the United States—was not a life to pass on to their children and demanded something better.

Despite everything that came together for peace in Northern Ireland, success was never certain and Clinton knew that. But he took risks, remained patient and never gave up. A great peace was finally won and has endured. It stands as incontrovertible proof that one impossible ancient conflict could be solved.

In fairness to Mitt Romney, he is not altogether wrong when he says about the Mideast that, “These are problems, and they’re very hard to solve.” But an American president is a figure of some influence in the world and should study the problem thoughtfully and try to help—and be willing to run the risk of failure. The only thing we know for sure is that if a president gives up without trying, the prospect for a solution is pretty much zero.

Before throwing in the towel, Romney should ask himself where Northern Ireland would be today if Bill Clinton had said about that conflict, as Romney has about the Mideast, “There’s just no way.”

*Penn Rhodeen is a lawyer and writer based in New Haven and Brooklyn. He is currently writing a book about the adventures of former congressman Bruce Morrison in the Irish peace process, whom he describes as the great political engineer of the American involvement crucial to ending the war.

Read more: <http://www.irishcentral.com/news/Mitt-Romney-says-Palestinian-Israeli-conflict-is-not-possible-to-solve-171129151.html#ixzz27Ui5tVCO>

Message Headers:

From: H <HDR22@clintonemail.com>
To: Oscar Flores [REDACTED]
Date: Sun, 30 Sep 2012 22:00:16 -0400
Subject: Fw: Piece in Irish Central today, Irish voice tomorrow

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