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BÉAL FEIRSTE  
1 July, 1993BELFAST  
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Mr. Sean O hUiginn  
Assistant Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Dublin 2.

PA on  
Political  
Development  
File

Dear Assistant Secretary

Visits by the President

I wrote to you on 23 June conveying some views expressed by the Secretary of State about the President's recent visit and conveying a proposal in respect of arrangements for future visits. At the time, I asked Martin Williams whether a similar message would be conveyed by the British Ambassador in Dublin. He told me there would be a similar proposal in that channel and, in response to my question, said its tone would also be similar. My question arose because of the nature of the Ambassador's demarche immediately prior to the President's visit.

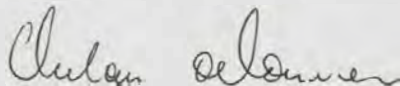
In the event, the Ambassador's note and the account I have heard of his approach to the Secretary to the Government seemed rude and aggressive with a concluding, risible threat that support would be withheld from future visits which is totally at odds with the views I heard at first hand from the Secretary of State although admittedly he was speaking informally over dinner. Martin Williams was clearly taken aback by the note and described it as one of the stiffest he had seen in his diplomatic experience. I pointed out that the tone adopted here has been consistently more conciliatory than that adopted by the Ambassador in Dublin and I asked Williams if he could shed any light on the reasons. Initially, he indicated that there was a difference between the Secretary of State's instructions and the Ambassador's note but pointed out that the Ambassador would have received his instructions in final form from the Foreign Office which has responsibility for visits to the UK as a whole. Williams came back yesterday to tell me that the instructions issued to the Ambassador had issued from the Government and that, of course, the Secretary of State agreed with them.

It is fairly clear to me from these exchanges that the instructions issued to the Ambassador were considerably toughened in the Foreign Office. Williams laid some emphasis on the fact that the instructions were Government instructions which may indicate that they also had the approval of Downing Street and/or the Cabinet Office. He said the Ambassador was not in any sense acting on his own initiative although

elements of his own views may have come across in his conversation with Mr Murray.

At least part of the reason for the tough line emerged in conversation at a dinner here last evening for Mr Murray. The NIO Deputy Secretary, Quentin Thomas, made clear repeatedly that the British Government were insisting on holding our Government responsible for the President's actions. They declined to accept that we were not in a position to control those actions - unless that is we were content that the Ambassador should deal directly with the President's office, a line which Mr Murray counselled would bring the Ambassador into serious difficulty with the Government. Again, Mr Thomas' comments differ sharply from those expressed to me last week by the Secretary of State.

Yours sincerely



Declan O'Donovan  
Joint Secretary