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Mr. Attorney General
cc PST
PSS
Mr F. Purney
Mr T Dalton
23/7/93
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SECURE FAX 916

21 July, 1993

TO: HQ FROM: BELFAST Pages: 2

FOR: A/Sec O hUiginn FROM: Joint Secretary

Tebbit Remarks

As already conveyed to Mr Hennessy, we took the opportunity of the visit last evening of Minister Ancram to raise this matter strongly (see below). The Minister for the Environment also raised it following a meeting with his opposite number, Mr Atkins, in Belfast today. He told the press he would like to see the remarks withdrawn.

The problem has been compounded today by Tebbit's failure to withdraw his remarks, indeed his justification of them, and by the weak reaction of NIO Ministers when they were asked to comment. We have sent you a transcript of remarks by the Secretary of State when he was doorstepped on a visit to the Ardoyne Ambulance Station. He was asked to talk about Lord Tebbit. He said in reply he was not in the business of commenting upon what other people said. "Those are Lord Tebbit's opinions. I don't share them. They were Lord Tebbit's words. I don't employ them." When invited to criticise Lord Tebbit in a joint appearance before the press with the Minister for the Environment, Minister Atkins followed this line noting that Lord Tebbit was a man of strong views and had suffered from terrorism (all the more reason to condemn it from whatever quarter it comes). We have already expressed our mounting concern to the British side that the Secretary of State and Mr Atkins, like the Prime Minister, did not take opportunities to condemn or even criticise Lord Tebbit's comments and we will be raising the matter again with the Minister of State in charge of security, Sir John Wheeler, who is coming here this evening.

Conversation with Minister Ancram

I brought up Lord Tebbit's remarks on Sky television saying I was doing so on the instructions of the Taoiseach. The remarks amounted to an incitement to violence. Their hopefully unintended context was also deeply worrying, i.e., TV claims of British military involvement in the Dublin and Monaghan bombings of the 1970's, further threats by Loyalists to bomb the South and UFF attacks on three SDLP politicians, including an MP, here on Monday night. I referred to the strong criticism expressed by the Government spokesman and by the Taoiseach yesterday in the Dail. I acknowledged that Lord Tebbit was no longer a member of the Government but he was a former Cabinet Minister and a former Chairman of the Tory Party, he remained a senior figure in British politics, and he might well be thought representative of Government views. It was essential that the Government should deplore his irresponsible and potentially deadly remarks.

I said I understood that the Prime Minister had not taken an opportunity when questioned by Mr Hume in the Commons to condemn Lord Tebbit's remarks, or dissociate the Government from them, which greatly concerned us (he said only that he may not share every Tebbit view). If a former Irish Minister and member of the Oireachtas had said the bombing of London would be justified if it brought the British to their senses and achieved Irish unity, the British Government would have been rightly outraged and I was quite certain that the Taoiseach would have personally and immediately condemned the remarks. I asked the Minister to convey this message to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister. He said he would do so and immediately indicated a sympathy with the views we had expressed. With reference to the Prime Minister's remarks in the Commons, he said John Hume had made a condemnation difficult for the Prime Minister by putting the remarks in the context of the recent controversy over exclusion orders (would the Home Secretary exclude Lord Tebbit from Northern Ireland?). If Hume had stuck to the main point, he thought he would have had a different response.

(Comment: There may be some truth in the Ministers reply. If Hume had wanted the Prime Minister to condemn the remarks, he would have been better advised not to bring up the exclusion issue although by his question he made a doubly effective political point.)

c.c. Ambassador, London

Note

Tebbit Remarks

SEEN BY
TADISEACH

W O Sullivan
Maitlin
Sullivan
22/7/93
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The Joint Secretary telephoned to say that he had raised Tebbit's remarks with Minister Ancram last evening. Ancram had said that he took our concerns very seriously and would report them to his colleagues.

Regarding the Prime Minister's failure in the Commons to condemn Tebbit's comments Ancram noted that John Hume's intervention had concluded with the proposal that an exclusion order should be served on Lord Tebbit. Ancram suggested that it was perhaps unfortunate that Hume had sought to mix the issues in this way. He felt sure that if Hume had confined himself to a request for a condemnation of incitement to terrorism this would have been forthcoming.

[Signature]
P. Hennessy
21 July, 1993

D. O'Sullivan

c. c. PST
PSS
A/Sec. O hUiginn
Mr. Finlay
Mr. Murren *Δ/7*
Mr. Dalton *Δ/5*

Do see please

JH

21/7/93

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~~Int O Sullivan~~ ~~McGillivray~~
22/7/93

SECURE FAX

~~Davis~~ ①

Do see please

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20 July, 1993.

To: Belfast
For: Joint Secretary

From: H. Q.
From: Sean O hUiginn

Re: Tebbit Remarks

1. The British side will already be aware from our media of the serious concern and revulsion at the remarks by Lord Tebbit in effect inciting the bombing of Dublin.
2. Had any member of the Oireachtas ever expressed such sentiments about bombs in England, it is easy to imagine the uproar in the British media and, also, the certain political ostracism which would follow here. To make matters worse, Lord Tebbit's remarks occur against a background of assassination attempts on a nationalist MP and Councillors. They come also at a time of heightened public debate on the circumstances of the Dublin bombings, with relatives of the victims pressing for renewed investigations into allegations of collusion.
3. We accept that the British Government cannot control the remarks of Lord Tebbit but they can certainly condemn them. Yet in a reply to Mr. Hume today the Prime Minister conspicuously failed to condemn and utterly dissociate himself from these remarks. This is likely to compound the damage done in terms of public perceptions here, where people will be aware that Lord Tebbit is a former senior Minister and remains an important member of the Conservative party, with the unfortunate consequence that his views may be thought representative.

4. The Taoiseach in reply to questions earlier today made clear his anger at these deplorable remarks and has asked that it be taken up at the highest level. The Tanaiste wishes you to raise our concerns at a senior level (possibly in your Ministerial contacts this evening?) and to report to him the position taken by the British Government on Lord Tebbit's remarks, whose incitement effects on loyalist paramilitaries can all too readily be imagined.

5. We shall be asking the Ambassador London to convey the Government's deep concern in similar terms.

ENDS