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AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ATHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

21 April, 1994.

Mr. Frank Murray,
Secretary to the Government,
Government Buildings,
Merrion Street,
Dublin 2.

Dear Frank,

Re: Ministerial visits North

Further to our earlier conversations, I enclose herewith the correspondence from the Secretariat on this matter.

The best approach would seem to be courtesy notification wherever possible via the Secretariat on prospective Ministerial visits, with details, including any details of itineraries, communicated through the operational police channels.

Yours sincerely,

Sean O hUiginn
Assistant Secretary

cc: Department of Justice

[Handwritten signature]

SECURE FAX 295

20 April, 1994

Pages: 1

TO: HQ FROM: BELFAST
FOR: A/SEC O HUGINN FROM: JOINT SECRETARY

MINISTERIAL VISITS

Further to my SF 242 of 8 April, Williams came back today to say that he had received the assent of everyone in his system (I took the reference to include Ambassador Blatherwick) to the views he expressed to me.

SECURE FAX 242

8 April 1994

Pages: 1

TO: HQ

FROM: BELFAST

FOR: A/SEC O HUIGINN

FROM: JOINT SECRETARY

Ministerial Visits

To confirm:

- I have had an informal word with Martin Williams, as you requested. He emphasised that the British Ambassador's complaint to the Secretary to the Government was about lack of notice of the recent visit to Newry by the Tanaiste and the recent visit to Derry by Minister Higgins, not about any aspect of the visits themselves.
- It is our joint understanding that the procedure agreed for visits by the President and by the Taoiseach does not extend to Ministerial visits generally. Williams had seen the Ambassador's report of his conversation with the Secretary to the Government and thought the Ambassador did seem to want to extend the procedure.
- I said I understood that in the case of the visit of the Tanaiste to Newry to appear on the RTE programme "Questions and Answers", the decision had been made that day. In the case of Minister Higgins's visit to Derry, I recalled that both Williams and myself had in fact been present when it was agreed at the Arts Ministers' meeting on 3 December last that both Ministers would attend the Celtic Film and Television Festival in Derry (Michael Ancram had to pull out at the last minute). Williams said the Ambassador would have known this anyway from the report of the meeting.
- Neither of us see why it should be necessary to involve the Embassy in all Ministerial visits. Notice or confirmation of such visits has usually been given through the Secretariat in recent years, although detail of itineraries has often been left to the police channel. This has the advantage for the British of ensuring that the NIO is aware of arrangements at senior level.
- Williams said that his views were his own and were informal. He intends to consult within his system and come back to me on the matter. He mentioned that, as already suggested above, the Ambassador might have different ideas.