



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/48/96

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting with British Ambassador
15 September, 1994

AST
PSS
Mr. F. Murray
Dr. Haney
Mr. Dalton
Print Sec
Ambs & W
Sde
15/9

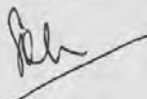
1. I had a meeting with Ambassador Blatherwick at his request this afternoon.
2. He raised with me the question of the Adams visa. The British hoped that Adams' arrival in the United States could be delayed for some time. They were anxious that the Ulster Unionist delegation should get there first. His understanding was that Adams' present plans were to travel around the 22nd September and to finish up in Washington on about the 4th October.
3. I said I was not directly involved in what Mark Durkan had pleasantly called "air traffic control over Washington", except in so far as the Tanaiste's visit was concerned. We had no difficulty of principle with the notion that the unionists might be there first. As regards the timing of Adams' visit to Washington, we understood the British had hoped that it could be postponed until after the Tory Party Conference. As a matter of analysis rather than policy, we saw some danger if it appeared that Adams' schedule was being made hostage to a low-level unionist delegation, or that his visit to Washington was being deliberately shunted to a period when Congress was not in session. That could give rise to very counter-productive controversy in the United States. I referred to the Manton letter which had been circulated last night. It would be important for the British not to become identified with a campaign on those terms. It might be successful in terms of the calendar, but could generate so much heat that the White House would feel it necessary to compensate Adams with a higher level reception that we would consider appropriate. The treatment of the unionist visit should also take account of the fact

that the unionist delegation was at a relatively marginal level, in spite of suggestions that Molyneux himself might have taken part.

4. We had a general discussion on the aftermath of the cessation. I said that we worried that the British tended to see themselves as spectators in terms of the peace process. We believed the present Republican leadership was sincere in its stated aims, and so far, very successful in taking their people with them. However if public opinion in Republican areas eventually came to the view that Adams "had been had", there would no doubt be a new leadership who would elbow him aside and a new cycle of violence could begin. It was therefore crucial that in all areas where there was no issue of principle, and no extraordinary security risk involved, the British Government should be at pains to reinforce the view in the Republican community that a reversion to violence was unthinkable. I stressed in particular the significance of closed border roads in that respect.

5. The Ambassador repeated the views we have heard from other British sources, that the Provisionals were still training, recruiting, engaging in reconnaissance, etc. The British were therefore uncertain as to what their real intentions were. They were hearing reports of pockets of dissidents in various areas. He thought the chasm between Republican Sinn Fein and both INLA and the Provisionals was too deep for a dissident movement to coalesce around Republican Sinn Fein. If it happened it would be likely to be a new Provisional splinter group. I said that if that happened, the factor that would decide its importance or otherwise would be the attitude of the core nationalist areas. The British doubts underlined rather than diminished the need for decisive action in relation to public opinion in those areas.

6. Upon leaving Ambassador Blatherwick raised the possibility of a good-will visit by a British Royal Navy vessel such as has happened between 1946 and 1970. The Royal Navy would wish to join other foreign naval vessels likely to take part in the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of the Irish Naval Service in 1996. They hoped it might be possible to have a visit in 1995, presumably to test the waters. I said I would consult on this. In general terms he could assume the Government were in favour of our relationships being normalised at every level. An exception would be made only where the likely public reaction might seriously undermine the objective of promoting goodwill. I thought it most unlikely that anything like that would happen in this case. I promised to revert to the issue after consultation.



Sean O hUiginn
15 September, 1994

Enc. 1

Between 1946 and 1970, when a security incident took place, British naval vessels paid goodwill visits to Irish ports in every year but two (1966 and 1969). Since 1970 only one visit has taken place - that of a Sea Cadet Corps training vessel, TS Appleby, in 1992. We would like to see a normal pattern of friendly visits by naval vessels re-established.

Many foreign naval vessels are likely to visit Irish ports to take part in the celebrations on the 50th anniversary of the Irish Naval Service in 1996. It would convey an inaccurate and inappropriate impression about the relationship between our countries and our navies were no Royal Navy vessels to participate. A discreet naval visit in 1995 would prepare the way for a visit in 1996. We have in mind a two day visit by a small ship from the Royal Navy to Alexandra Basin in Dublin.

BRITISH EMBASSY

DUBLIN

15 September 1994