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IMMEDIATE

6 September, 1994

Pages: 2

TO: HQ

FROM: BELFAST

FOR: DAVID DONOGHUE

FROM: JOINT SECRETARY

British response to IRA cessation

1. I had a number of exchanges with Martin Williams today. He had been asked to analyse Mitchell McLoughlin's statement on RTE last evening which we drew to the Tanaiste's attention during his dinner with the Secretary of State. McLoughlin said "the Dublin Government, the SDLP and the American Government have correctly interpreted the IRA's position". I mentioned the Secretary of State's remark in an interview in today's Financial Times that "if Mr. Adams were to say 'the Irish have correctly perceived our intention to give it up for good', that's fine. Why not say it?"
2. I said the IRA could not be expected to say precisely down to the last jot what the Governments had wanted them to say. The Secretary of State himself had said this was not necessary. It was difficult to see any difference between what the Secretary of State had asked in the FT and what McLoughlin had said on RTE. Williams insisted there was a difference. First, McLoughlin was saying he was repeating something that Adams had said which, in fact, Adams had not said (Adams said "responded correctly"). Second, McLoughlin was not Adams, he did not have the same authority. Third, when An Phoblacht itself could call the cessation a "suspension", although that had been disowned later, there was ground for legitimate doubt. I said I had seen McLoughlin and I had no doubt he was making a deliberate comment. The British view was incomprehensible unless they simply did not want to have opportunities to accept that the cessation was intended to be permanent (I recalled the offer made and declined at the meeting of officials in Stormont last Thursday).
- VB*
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3. Williams complained about the speed of the Taoiseach's meeting with Adams today. I said we thought the right thing to do was to consolidate the cessation as rapidly as we could. I gave him a copy of the statement issued afterwards, drawing attention to the total and absolute commitment to democratic and peaceful means of resolving political problems.
4. Williams said we seemed to have forgotten commitments made in joint statements to wait before accepting any renunciation of violence as genuine. He said he was

thinking of the statement following the Brussels Summit last October which said that all those claiming serious interest in advancing the cause of peace in Ireland should renounce for good the use of or support for violence; and that if and when such a renunciation of violence had been made and sufficiently demonstrated, new doors could open, and both Governments would wish to respond imaginatively to the new situation which would arise. I said we believed that such a renunciation had indeed been shown by the announcement of a complete cessation, by the definitive commitment to the democratic process and by the whole context of the statement. Moreover, all our readings of the situation confirmed it. (Comment: there was an echo of the Brussels statement in today's briefing line from Downing St.)

Conclusion

5. My conclusion was that I could understand that the British might not want to appear too welcoming or too ready in response to the IRA statement, granted especially the sensitivities in the Unionist community, but almost a week had now passed and they seemed to be testing the IRA statement to destruction rather than moving to consolidate a historic gain. Williams said if they intended a permanent cessation, it should not be a problem to make that clear. As of now, there remained a doubt. In relation to loyalists, I said there was a risk that far from having their confidence bolstered by British coolness, the loyalist side would be influenced to conclude that they would be justified in continuing their campaign. I hoped that had been taken into equal consideration. Williams said it had.