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25 June, 1996.

*F.A.O. Secretary Murray*

*faxed 25/6  
ED*

Mr. Seán O hUiginn,  
Second Secretary,  
Anglo-Irish Division,  
Department of Foreign Affairs,  
St. Stephen's Green,  
DUBLIN 2.

*PST  
PSS  
✓ M O hUinn  
4E 26/6 -  
for info*

Dear Seán,

You asked for my views on the proposal that the President visit Manchester on 6 July to visit the scene of the recent bombing and to meet with city officials.

At the outset I should say that the reaction to the Manchester bombing in British public and political opinion has been quite muted.

There appears to be a widespread understanding that the attack is the work of a small group which, as the Prime Minister said to me that Saturday, has "got nothing to do with the Irish people". Undoubtedly the Taoiseach's and Tánaiste's appearances on British television and radio over the weekend and their strong condemnation of the IRA action helped greatly with this.

The Irish promotion agencies - Trade Board, IDA, Bord Failte, Bord Bia - have reported no significant negative reaction, unlike in the days and weeks after the Canary Wharf attack.

In Manchester itself the local Irish community tell us that the reaction has also been surprisingly quiet. The Irish Centre has received no more than a handful of abusive calls and the Irish community have gone ahead with Irish functions. We are keeping in close touch with community leaders who have not asked for any specific Embassy help - except a letter of appreciation to the leader of Manchester City Council for visiting the Irish Centre on the night of the

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bombing. Their attitude is that they have nothing to apologise for, they are part of the city and of city life and that they should be fully involved in rebuilding confidence. As one of them put it to me "we do not want the divisions in Northern Ireland to be imported into our adopted city". They have decided not to maintain a low profile, as in the past, but to be upfront in their reaction. To this end they have asked to see Michael Heseltine when he visits Manchester tomorrow and Mo Mowlam when she is there on Friday.

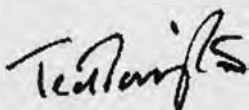
Against this background I am sure that a visit by the President could be used to emphasise the abhorrence of the Irish people at the attack and our solidarity with the victims of IRA violence. It could also be used as a platform to appeal to the IRA to cease their campaign against British cities and to restore the ceasefire. In the light of the attitude of the Irish community outlined above a visit would be likely to have the support of the community.

My one reservation about the proposal is the risk that, notwithstanding the positive aspects outlined above, a visit serve to connect the Irish State with the bombing in the minds of the British public in a kind of "guilt by association". Would images of the President at the site of the attack and in the ruins of the shopping centre link Ireland and the Irish people to the attack in a way that has not happened to date? And is there a risk of local antipathy to such a high profile visitor from Ireland?

On the last point we would, I feel, need the advice of British security (which of course we have not yet approached) on the likelihood of public protests and any threats to the President's welfare.

On the question of "guilt by association" I think that the President's record, her standing in Britain, especially after her successful official visit, and her management of the visit itself would be capable of overcoming any such perception.

Yours sincerely,



Ted Barrington  
Ambassador