

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr ●eve

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B)
 PS/Ministers (L&B)
 PS/PUS (L&B)
 PS/Mr Bloomfield
 Mr Brennan
 Mr Stephens
 Mr Chesterton
 Mr Merifield
 Mr Gilliland
 Mr Carvill
 Mr Wood
 Mr Lyon
 Mr Hamilton (DOE)
 Miss Elliott
 Mr G Hewitt (Liaison)
 Mr Bickham
 Mr Carlisle MP

MA E.I MAY 1985
 215 1632

TAOISEACH'S VISIT: NORTHERN IRELAND REACTION

The Taoiseach's visit to Londonderry on 30 April has been attacked by both nationalist and unionist politicians. Spokesmen for the IIP and Sinn Fein have described the visit as a pro-SDLP election stunt whilst unionist politicians have made it clear that representatives of the Dublin government are not welcome in Northern Ireland.

Nationalist reaction

2. For Sinn Fein, Dr Fitzgerald's visit could not have come at a worse time, coinciding as it did with the launch of their election manifesto in Belfast. On top of this, the Taoiseach's unequivocal remarks about his government's support for constitutional nationalism guaranteed an angry response from Sinn Fein. Martin McGuinness, the Sinn Fein Assemblyman for Londonderry, hit out at the visit by referring to this morning's press photographs of Dr Fitzgerald shaking hands with an RUC officer. "The image of SDLP supporter Garret Fitzgerald shaking hands with a Loyalist gunman" he said "should stick in the minds of nationalists when they go to the polls on May 15". Irish Independence Party leader Fergus McAteer welcomed the Taoiseach's visit but said that, coming as it did only two weeks before the election, it could only be interpreted as a gimmick.

Unionists

3. In a statement yesterday afternoon, Dr Paisley said that Southern politicians would not be welcome in Northern Ireland so long as they continued to claim sovereignty over the six counties and to harbour IRA murderers. Echoing these remarks, the DUP's press secretary said the Taoiseach's presence in Northern Ireland was "obnoxious to Protestants" and described his visit as the

CONFIDENTIAL

E.R.

CONFIDENTIAL

"height of cheek and hypocrisy". "Has the Anglo-Irish process gone so far," he asked "that Fitzgerald can strut around our country as if he already had jointsovereignty?" Although an Official Unionist spokesman is quoted in today's Irish News as saying that his party were not unduly worried about the visit, Harold McCusker and Frank Millar have both said that the trip was an insult to Ulster people. Mr Millar has called for an emergency debate in the Assembly this afternoon.

Comment

4. Judging by Sinn Fein's reaction, the visit is likely to boost the SDLP's electoral prospects - especially in Derry. Mr Kilfedder is expected to allow today's emergency debate to go ahead, thus providing unionist politicians with the chance to raise Protestant fears about sovereignty and the Anglo-Irish process. The Prime Minister's remarks in the House of Commons yesterday have helped to ensure that unionist anger is directed at the Taoiseach rather than HMG. Meanwhile, Mr Hume has claimed rather disingenuously that the date of the visit was fixed by Aer Arann and had nothing to do with the district council elections.

S Hewitt

S G HEWITT
Political Affairs Division
1 May 1985

CONFIDENTIAL