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- 8 JUL 1992
N.I.O. LONDON

From: HM Ambassador, Dublin

6 July 1992

G R Archer Esq
Republic of Ireland Department
FCO
(By BLIS)

Mr Mayne
- for file
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VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT TO SCOTLAND, 1-3 JULY *1992*

1. The President's visit to Scotland last week received wide press coverage here, all of it favourable. I saw her off at the airport, and was present to welcome her back. She said she was very pleased with the way the visit had gone. She had been well received everywhere. She was clearly moved by her welcome at Edinburgh, where her father studied medicine.

2. You will have seen the Irish Times editorial of 4 July which stressed the links between Ireland and Scotland, and noted the irony that for neighbours who were so geographically close and so "comfortable" with one another, to use the President's phrase, this should be the first formal visit by an Irish President to Scotland. Asked before her departure from Scotland about the possibility of a State Visit to Britain, the President had said that this was a political decision for Governments - though in her experience such visits were a useful way to bring peoples together. The Irish Times, picking up these remarks, said that in the light of the relationship between the Republic and Britain, their EC partnership and deepening co-operation over Northern Ireland, "the question surely is not why but why not?".

3. You know my own view, that the next step should be for the President to call on The Queen during a visit to London. This is right in protocol terms: she is a Head of State, and should be treated as such. It is increasingly inappropriate, given the President's very public and very successful State Visits abroad, to think in terms of a half-way house meeting with the Prince of Wales. While a visit here by The Queen is still unthinkable (it would have overtones of Irish capitulation and a British re-conquest), a call on The Queen in London would be widely regarded here as another crucial step in healing the past and a sign of British acceptance of the Republic as a sovereign, friendly equal. I doubt there would be much public disapproval here. However, unless the Taoiseach's and Nally's minds have changed recently, the Irish Government remain very nervous of Fianna Fail reactions to any contact with the Royal Family and still somewhat jealous of the President. Nor, I am sure, could we ourselves envisage so heavily symbolic a meeting until we are much clearer on the way ahead in the talks process. A meeting of this sort would not be something to be thrown away: for example, it could conceivably be used to underline a significant point later in the talks.

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4. I imagine there might still be complications over Unionist sentiment, though the President's visits to Northern Ireland have proceeded remarkably smoothly and with little evident hostility even from the DUP.

D E S Blatherwick

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cc: J A Chilcot Esq CB, PUS, NIO (L&B) - B
N H R A Broomfield Esq CMG, FCO - B (via RID)

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