

ESK IMMEDIATE

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FROM: M T H MAXWELL
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DATE: 21 NOVEMBER 1994

cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (DFP, B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L) - B
PS/Baroness Denton (DED, DANI&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Loughran
Mr Semple
Mr Bell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Gibson
Mr Quinn
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Dodds - B
Mr Margetts - B
Mrs Kenny
Mr Gordon, RID, FCO - B
Mr Capella, UKREP
Mr Lyall-Grant, Cabinet Office

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L) - B

EUROPEAN UNION PACKAGE OF ASSISTANCE TO NORTHERN IRELAND : POSSIBLE VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND CENTRE IN EUROPE (NICE) BY PRESIDENT JACQUES DELORS

1. During the Summer of 1994 the Northern Ireland Centre in Europe made tentative soundings within President Delors' Cabinet about the President's interest in making a return visit to the Northern Ireland Centre in Europe, based in Brussels, prior to his departure as President at the end of the year. The occasion would mark the third anniversary of the inauguration of the Centre by President Delors, and would register the Centre's appreciation of his support for its efforts since then. No formal approach was made lest such an invitation would reduce the likelihood of a visit by the President to Northern Ireland during the same period. These early contacts pre-dated the ceasefires and the formation of the EC Task Force on Northern Ireland.

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Indications coming from Brussels suggest that President Delors is unlikely to be able to accept the Prime Minister's invitation to attend the Inward Investment Conference for Northern Ireland on 13 December because of European Parliamentary commitments.

3. However, we have also been advised that President Delors might be amenable to accepting an invitation to visit the Northern Ireland Centre in Europe on 30 November. This is the date on which the Commission will be invited to agree the European Union aid package, following which an announcement about proposals for the package will be made. We have been advised that President Delors might wish to use his visit to the Centre to "say something about the European Commission's work in relation to Northern Ireland". While this will not be a definitive statement about the EU package (this will come at the Essen Summit on 9/10 December), it will undoubtedly refer to some of the "ideas" which are contained in the package. If the President confirms his interest in attending the NICE event, it would be intended to associate UKREP, NIO and relevant Government offices at appropriate Ministerial and senior official level with the event. The three Northern Ireland MEPS would be asked to host the occasion.
4. No 10 Downing Street has made it clear that the Prime Minister is anxious to take the maximum possible credit for the EU package. The possible involvement of NICE in any announcement on 30 November will therefore be of interest to them.
5. There are some attractions in having President Delors make the initial announcement of the EU package in the Northern Ireland Centre in Europe, since he will be making an announcement in Brussels following the Commission meeting on 30 November in any event. However, there may be three possible difficulties associated with using NICE as the location for the announcement, viz
 - a. Downing Street might not be amused at President Delors

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taking the glory in this way, although it has to be recognised that it is a Commission announcement, and he would be making a statement in Brussels on that day in any event;

b. NICE already has a fairly inflated ego, and this event will do little to temper its self-importance; and

c. we will ourselves be making a fairly negative statement on the 1994 PE Survey shortly after the Commission announcement on 30 November on the EU package, with which Delors' upbeat statement will be compared. However, this would again have happened in any event, and we can point to the Prime Minister's commitment on additionality.

On balance, we find it difficult to oppose the idea that President Delors should attend the NICE event and make a preliminary statement about the EU package. At the end of the day it is the Commission's announcement, and it would have been made in Brussels on that day in any event. There are also attractions in having President Delors personally involved in a statement at a Northern Ireland-associated location.

6. You will, however, wish to get in touch with No 10 to let them know of this development, and to take their mind on the proposed NICE event. We will, of course, be providing full briefing and a line to take for No 10 in advance of the Commission announcement on 30 November.

[Signed: MTHM]

M T H MAXWELL
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

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