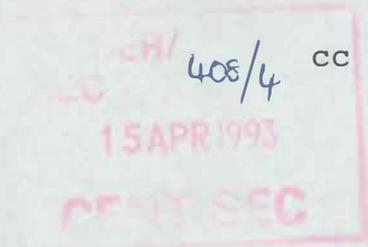


FROM: HM AMBASSADOR, DUBLIN

Date: 13 April 1993



cc (BLIS):

PS/SofS (L&B)
 PS/Mr Hanley (L&B)
 PS/PUS (L&B)
 PS/Mr Fell
 Mr Ledlie
 Mr Bell
 Mr Williams
 Mr Watkins
 Mr Cooke
 Mr Dodds
 Mr Hill
 Mr Maccabe
 Mr Rickard
 Ms Lodge
 Mr Archer, RID

pm hof

Mr Thomas, NIO - B

NORTHERN IRELAND: POLITICAL VIEWS IN THE REPUBLIC

1. Over the Easter weekend there has been speculation here about moves to restart the talks process, about John Hume's talks with Gerry Adams and about PIRA attitudes generally.

2. I reported on 7 April the Taoiseach's message via Frank Murray underlining his suspicions that HMG might envisage an internal settlement. The Taoiseach issued a statement late on 7 April to the effect that he welcomed the Prime Minister's call to restart the talks and was confident that the Government would be fully "consulted" before any initiative on talks was taken by the Northern Secretary: "you can take it we will be involved with the British Government in any initiative to put new ideas or new proposals." The Taoiseach was probably speaking off the cuff to counter suggestions here that his Government might be pushed aside by a British Government determined to go ahead with an internal solution. Whether the Irish will now feel obliged to insist on full prior consultation has yet to be seen.

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3. There has also been much talk of rifts between the Irish Government and the SDLP. These almost certainly reflect earlier British observations (in private as well as in public) to the effect that if the talks are to restart and prove fruitful the SDLP as well as the Unionists will need to show flexibility. They also reflect the Irish Government's initial negative reaction to John Hume's suggestion ten days ago that if the talks were to get nowhere the two Governments should put a blueprint to people in both parts of Ireland over the heads of the politicians. In contrast to similar occasions in the past, the Irish Government has made no immediate move to close ranks with the SDLP: perhaps Mr Spring is prepared to allow some light to be seen between them provided the gap is manageable.

4. The Government's reaction to the revelation of Hume's talks with Adams was guarded and a little prim. It was a matter for John Hume, "but the Government believes that he would not have engaged in such contacts if they did not appear worth while. The Government as a general principle approves of approaches by clergymen and other morally concerned individuals to paramilitaries or people who might have influence with them to try and persuade them of the futility of violence." Undoubtedly one reason for this coolness is the firmly negative public reaction here to PIRA's meeting with Senator Gordon Wilson and their Easter message to the British Government. Politicians and commentators alike have stressed that PIRA are up a dead end and have nothing to offer, and that people who talk to them are wasting their time, deluding themselves and others and encouraging a continuation of violence.

5. No doubt the scene will shift. But meanwhile the important themes for us are continuing suspicion about HMG's intentions over an internal settlement, a degree of uncertainty in the Nationalist camp and a reinforced public awareness of the goals and nature of PIRA. It would help if an early opportunity could be found for the

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Secretary of State to reaffirm in low key but publicly that HMG remains committed to the March 1991 approach, including the interconnection of the three strands.

(Signed)

D E S Blatherwick

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