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FROM: J A Dew
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cc: Mr Thomas - B
Mr Cooke - B
HMA

Mr Archer - B
RID

NORTHERN IRELAND: IRISH FRUSTRATION

1. I was sat, not entirely fortuitously I gathered, next to Fergus Finlay at the annual DFA dinner for the Diplomatic corps last night. Not an occasion for privacy, his other neighbour a distracting ravissante, we had limited scope for serious discussion. He spoke fairly freely when he could however.

Preparations for the Summit

2. The Irish side had been seriously dismayed by the "extremely negative" reaction to their text in London on 10 November. We should be in no doubt about that. A strongly worded letter had gone to the Prime Minister from the Taoiseach; the reply was keenly awaited. Expectations that it would be helpful from an Irish point of view were not high.

3. The minimum Irish requirement from the Summit was that the peace process at least, distinct from the talks process if necessary, should be alive, well and and seen to be going somewhere. The basic problem was to draft a declaration which would attract the IRA while being acceptable (or at least tolerable) to Unionists. This was of course easier said than done. But the Irish Government had gone out on a limb to try to achieve it, and felt strongly that some movement was called for from the British. Spring personally faced a lot of hostile criticism on account of his six principles. (Spring's speech at the dinner pointedly called for imagination and risk taking on Northern Ireland from all sides.)

Unionists

4. Molyneux appeared to be playing a chess game rather than engaging seriously. This was maddening for Finlay (and of course Spring). Prospects for arranging an early meeting with Spring remained frustrating. Molyneux and Adams were the only two leaders who appeared to be taking no risks at all. Could

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HMG not put some pressure on Molyneaux to respond more positively to Spring, and accept that there was scope for a peace process which would not threaten Unionists? Or were our hands tied in dealings with him?

Spring's US Visit

5. He would accompany Spring to the US next week. The aim was, he said not entirely joking, to "light a bonfire" ie generate renewed US pressure behind the peace process. I urged him not to overdo it, or think it would solve their problems for them. The Irish Government he stressed could not afford to be seen in the US to be abandoning Hume, any more than it could domestically. The Irish had been taken aback by the implications of the use of the acronym 'PIRA' in Clinton's letter about the Adams visa. This was a term only the Brits used. Spring would be closely in touch with developments between Dublin and London while away - "we are, believe it or not, a team", and the visit would be brief - perhaps just two working days.

(SIGNED)

J A Dew