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Immediate
Ms Lodge
Mr Beeton
*Ms Margetts **
(8)

FROM: Q J THOMAS, DUS(L)
19 November 1993

PS/Secretary of State (L&B)

cc PS/Michael Ancram (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Mr Fell
Mr Bell
Mr Watkins
Mr Williams
Mr Wood (L&B)
Mr Maccabe
Mr Brooker
Mr Cooke
Mr Dodds
Mr Quinn
Mr Kyle
Mr Caine
Mr Archer, RID
HMA, Dublin

** pl. convey the gist of this to Washington (this pm) (in bounding)*
DHL C
19/11

IRISH PRESS STORY

The Irish Press this morning prints what looks like the Irish draft paper in response to that which we gave them in the Liaison Group on 24 September. The Ambassador has spoken to Mr Sean O hUiginn who is apologetic and embarrassed. He confirms that this is indeed the draft paper though in a form which had not been finalised or secured ministerial approval. He says it is unauthorised disclosure, and not a calculated leak.

2. On the other hand Ms O'Reilly's covering story says "sources close to government have told the Irish Press that the acknowledgement, if made by the British, would meet the demand in the Hume/Adams initiative for the British government to make a declaration that it has no long term interest in maintaining full union with the North. The Ambassador has also been told by the Secretary to the government that he knows of no authorised disclosure. The Ambassador may make further enquiries. Our attitude to the leak depends somewhat on that.

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3. The Ambassador reports that the DFA's line in response to press enquiries will be

This paper has not been presented to the government or approved.

A number of documents are circulating at official level.

This document has nothing to do with the peace process.

This document has not been put to the British government.

4. In the meantime I have suggested to the Press Office that our line might be this:

"This appears to be an internal Irish paper. We have been told this is an unauthorised disclosure of an internal paper on which Irish officials have been working and which has not yet been finalised or approved.

The paper has not been submitted to us officially or in private. Accordingly we have neither approved the paper, or any element of it, or been invited to do so.

In these circumstances it would be inappropriate for the British government to comment on it.

If a paper is submitted to the British government in private in the proper way we shall of course study it with interest.

Background briefing

This paper, if it is an authentic one, may be evidence that the Irish government is preparing to submit a paper to us in furtherance of the programme of work agreed at the September IGC. As such it is a welcome sign. We have no comment on the substance of the paper."

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5. This general line has also been given to No. 10.

6. It is a little early to assess the impact and effects of this. If we had received this paper in private some weeks ago we could clearly have made something of it in negotiations which would not have been easy but which would have been conducted in something like the same ball park. But now this disclosure will clearly make it very difficult, if not impossible, to bring the negotiation of this paper to a conclusion. On one reading the exercise, in particular if it is seen to be a deliberate piece of leaking as I suspect, then it should remove any inhibitions there might have been on the British government putting its own proposals in the public domain, preferably in the form of a White Paper.

(Signed QJT)

Q J THOMAS
OAB 6447

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