

**Dermot Nally
Papers**

UCDA P254/8

VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND BY PRESIDENT ROBINSON, 18-19 JUNE 1993

I have been instructed on behalf of the United Kingdom Government to report our serious concern at the proposed inclusion in the projected visit by President Robinson to Northern Ireland of a two hour meeting in West Belfast on the afternoon of Friday 18 June.

As developed by the groups who are organising it, this event has become a very one sided affair. The list of people expected to be present includes a number of prominent members of Sinn Fein. There are some persons who have been convicted of terrorist offences or who are suspected of involvement in support for terrorist activities.

A meeting by President Robinson with such people would do very grave disservice to community relations in Northern Ireland. It would have the inevitable effect of exacerbating threats in security there. It would have a very serious and prejudicial impact on Unionist opinion. They would see it as a calculated expression of support by the President personally and by the Irish Government for unconstitutional politics.

Such a meeting would also inevitably have an impact on the political standing of the British Government in Northern Ireland and of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland personally. In the circumstances he could not but make clear in public that such a visit, if it goes ahead, was doing so against his specific advice.

We would also be concerned about the security implications of such a meeting. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland would also have to refer to this aspect in his public statement making clear that by proceeding with the visit the President was ignoring his advice that it might endanger life.

In addition the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland would need to make clear that full details of the proposed visit had only been made available to us three days in advance, precluding any possibility of adjusting the arrangements so as to avoid these difficulties.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is well aware of the profound damage which would be caused to bilateral relations between Britain and Ireland by his having to make such a statement. He therefore earnestly trusts that President Robinson will not go ahead with this element of her proposed visit.