

**Dermot Nally
Papers**

UCDA P254/8

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Min.
P.T.

CONFIDENTIAL

Uimhir.....

Taoiseach,

President's Visit to Northern Ireland

West Belfast Programme

The British Ambassador called on me at home last night at 11.05 p.m. (by arrangement) and gave me the attached note which he had received very late yesterday evening, on instructions from London. I was accompanied by Mr. John Kennedy of this Department who has been involved in finalising the overall arrangements for the President's forthcoming visit to Northern Ireland. The note sets out the concerns of the British Government about the proposed visit to West Belfast from a political and security perspective. The Ambassador asked that the note be read carefully. He indicated that it had been cleared by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The note points out the down-side implications of the West Belfast programme and requests that the President cancel this element of her forthcoming visit to Northern Ireland. If this request is not acceded to, the Ambassador said that the Secretary of State would have to make it clear in public that, in undertaking the engagement in West Belfast, the President was doing so against his specific advice and that the visit might endanger life.

The inadequacy of the notice of the visit would also have to be mentioned. In broad terms, the political impact of the President turning up and associating herself with people connected with the Provisional IRA, was something that the Secretary of State could not go along with. In his view, this part of the visit to Northern Ireland was dangerous and inadvisable. He also referred to the effect that the President meeting people connected with terrorism would have on her own standing and the likely impact on Unionist opinion. A visit to West Belfast on the lines proposed would also have adverse implications for both Governments.

I undertook to convey the note to my authorities. The Ambassador added that it was likely that the matter would be mentioned to the Taoiseach by the Secretary of State at the Summit meeting in London later today.

The Ambassador also made the point that the President was a constitutional Head of State and he assumed she would be amenable to advice in respect of her Programme.

After the Ambassador's visit, which was of about a 1/2-hour duration, I telephoned Mr. Sean O hUiginn of the Department of Foreign Affairs to advise him of the situation. We agreed that the note, as received, should be forwarded to the Áras without delay, for further consideration.



Frank Murray,
16 June, 1993.

c.c. Tánaiste; Mr. S. O'hUiginn; Dr. M. Mansergh.