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MIPT: ANGLO-IRISH NON-SUMMIT 3 DECEMBER: FURTHER IRISH PRESS REACTION

SUMMARY

1. SUNDAY PAPERS REFLECT THEMES OF PREVIOUS DAY, ALL BUT ONE SUPPORTING THE TAOISEACH'S APPROACH. RECOGNITION THAT SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS REMAIN AND THAT THE TIMEFRAME FOR PEACE COULD BE LENGTHENING.

DETAIL

2. THE MEETING ON 3 DECEMBER AGAIN DOMINATED THE IRISH MEDIA ON SUNDAY 5 DECEMBER. IN GENERAL THE SUNDAY PAPERS REPEATED THE THEMES OF THE PREVIOUS DAY (MY TELNO 439) STRESSING THE SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCES WHICH STILL REMAIN BETWEEN BOTH GOVERNMENTS.

3. THE SUNDAY PRESS SUGGESTS THAT 'IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT A POLITICAL BREAKTHROUGH IN NORTHERN IRELAND' BUT RECOGNISES THAT 'THE HARD BARGAINING HAS BEGUN'. IT STATES THAT 'THE ONE POSITIVE SIGN FROM FRIDAY'S MEETING IS THAT THE AGENDA BEING DISCUSSED IS STILL THAT DRAWN UP BY THE IRISH GOVERNMENT ... IT IS ALSO POSITIVE THAT WE HAVE IN MR MAJOR A PRIME MINISTER WHO IS INTERESTED IN FINDING A LASTING AGREEMENT' BUT, IT ASKS, IS HE 'PREPARED TO GO THE EXTRA MILE?'. IT BELIEVES THAT ANY SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS WILL REST ON WHETHER THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT CAN JOIN THE RANKS OF THE PERSUADERS. 'IN FACT THEY HAVE A DUTY TO JOIN THOSE RANKS AND JOIN THEM NOW.'

4. THE SUNDAY TRIBUNE TRIES TO LOWER EXPECTATIONS BY SAYING THAT PEACE ON TERMS THAT DO NOT THREATEN LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF ANY COMMUNITY IS ACHIEVABLE POSSIBLY IN THE SHORT TERM BUT,

MORE REALISTICALLY, IN THE MEDIUM TERM. IT FEARS HOWEVER THAT 'THERE IS A DANGER THAT A FAILURE TO ACHIEVE A BREAKTHROUGH QUICKLY MAY PROVE SO DISPIRITING TO THOSE INVOLVED AS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO ABANDON THE PROCESS.'

5. THE SUNDAY INDEPENDENT (WHICH HAS CONSISTENTLY ATTACKED THE HUME/ADAMS PROCESS) SAYS THAT WHILE THE PLAIN TALKING MAY HAVE HELPED TO CLEAR THE AIR 'FORMIDABLE DIFFICULTIES REMAIN.' IT SAYS 'IRONICALLY, THE BIGGEST OBSTACLES TO ACHIEVING PEACE REMAIN THE FEAR AND SUSPICION THAT THE PROCESS ITSELF HAS RAISED WITHIN NORTHERN IRELAND, PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE CLUMSY, INSENSITIVE, SECRETIVE, AND DELIBERATELY MISLEADING MANNER IN WHICH IT HAS BEEN ADVANCED BY THE GOVERNMENTS.' IT RECOGNISES THAT THE EVENTUAL UNIONIST REACTION 'COULD WELL BE TO ESCALATE VIOLENCE. IF THIS IS SO, IT WOULD BE IRONIC IF THE PRICE OF PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WAS FOUND TO BE CIVIL WAR INVOLVING THE REPUBLIC' AND ASKS 'THE REPUBLIC HAS A GREAT DEAL TO LOSE IN TERMS OF PEACE AND STABILITY, AS WELL AS ECONOMICS AND JOBS. HOW MUCH HAS IT TO GAIN?'

BLATHERWICK

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