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WASHINGTON, BIS NEW YORK

19 November 1993

Northern Ireland: Leak of Irish Paper

Summary

1. Irish talks paper published. DFA apologetic and embarrassed.

Detail

2. OhUiginn (DFA) has confirmed that the text in today's Irish Press (faxed to RID and NIO - see also MIFT) is indeed the verbatim Irish draft response to the British Liaison Group paper handed to the Irish in September. It had been finalized by officials but not approved by Ministers. OhUiginn said he was deeply embarrassed and apologetic. He recognized that the publication of the paper would be damaging in Northern Ireland.
3. The Secretary to the Government claims to be unsighted. Mansergh (Taoiseach's office) is away.
4. The DFA are not issuing a formal statement, but telling enquirers that no such document has been presented to the Government or approved by them, that a number of internal documents are circulating, that this document has nothing to do with the peace process, and that it has not been presented to HMG.
4. OhUiginn and Murray seemed genuinely surprised by the leak. It could I suppose have been authorised by the Taoiseach or the Tanaiste in order to put pressure on HMG to move quickly over the "peace process" and/or to set out the Irish position on a take or leave basis, perhaps in the Hume/Adams context (in an accompanying article the journalist concerned claims that according to "sources close to the talks" the British declaration demanded by Hume/Adams is very much along the lines of the wording on self-determination). On the other hand, the Irish must be aware of the damage the leak could do in Northern Ireland and to their relations with us. And why publish? The DFA's press briefing reinforces my suspicion that it is indeed unauthorised. But this makes it no less damaging, and it leaves unanswered the question how such a document could have reached the press at so sensitive a time. If not a simple blunder, it could be a bit of misplaced private enterprise by someone in the Irish machine.

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