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DEFENCE OFFICE

FROM: HM Ambassador
British Embassy, Dublin

DATE: 29 November 1993

cc: Mr Thomas-B

G Archer-B
RID

cc P.S. SAS 29/11/93
P S P W
4 P S M. Full-B
P S M. Full-B
4 P. Donnell-B
R. Cook
4 R. Ridd-B
R. Burt
4 R. Ray-B

NORTHERN IRELAND

1. As I reported to Rod Lyne by telephone at the time, Martin Mansergh rang on 27 November to pass on three points from the Taoiseach confirming what he had told Sir R Butler and me the previous evening:

- a) an opportunity had been thrown away. The Irish Joint Declaration had been gutted and its heart destroyed. Our draft could not possibly achieve the intended effect with PIRA;
- b) had our problem been with the format of the Irish draft, the Irish would have been ready to recast their language; but it was clear that our real problem lay with the content;
- c) the reasons we had given for putting forward our draft were flimsy in the extreme. The alleged association with Hume/Adams could be no bar: as the newspapers would shortly reveal, we had had more direct contacts with Adams' people ourselves. As for their own leaked document, it was a legitimate paper and could not possibly invalidate the process.

2. I said that it was for the Irish to decide what attitude to take towards our draft. It represented a genuine attempt in good faith to produce the outcome they too had in mind, but HMG were responsible for Northern Ireland and must make their own best judgements. We still hoped to discuss our draft with them. While individual passages in their draft were defensible against loyalist criticism, the tone and presentation were not. And there were points of our own we needed to insert. Mansergh said that tone and presentation were important: the Irish draft already leaned too far in the unionist direction, and he was not sure it would now fly with the Provisionals (ie, by inference, it had not been put to them). The Irish were upset that after so long and so detailed a discussion of their drafts we had now come up with our own radically different one five days before the Summit. I sought to rebut his points at 1(c) above: the Hume/Adams taint was real and difficult, and as to the leaked document, what mattered was not whether it was legitimate but the reaction it had provoked among unionists. After several trips round familiar houses, Mansergh said that the Irish Cabinet would have to give its decision on Tuesday.

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3. Rod Lynne and I concluded when we spoke that our best course was probably to sit tight. I think that is right. Our draft is the most Ministers judge the unionist market will bear, and even if it was not, we could hardly put in a new one now. Despite his vehement reaction yesterday the Taoiseach expressly left a decision to Tuesday's Irish Cabinet meeting. He may be waiting to see if we shift (which may be the purpose of Mansergh's message today). But my guess is that he will recommend rejection, and that his colleagues will probably agree. There were one or two signs last night that Mansergh and OhUiginn might not want to close the door, and some Ministers, in particular Labour, will probably be cautious. But I do not hold out much hope.

4. As to Irish motives in all this, Reynolds almost certainly does believe that his judgment is right, that an opportunity is there and that with a great prize in view we are foolish to argue over words (though this is a country where civil wars are fought over words). He probably believes, genuinely, that we overestimate or exaggerate likely unionist reactions and are weak in not facing up to them. He underplays his own doubts and exaggerates the prospects for success in an attempt to bully us as he sees it for our mutual good.

5. Could you please urgently fax a copy of this to Rod Lyne at No 10?

(SIGNED)

D E S Blatherwick