cc P.S. SQS

P S Nichol Ancram

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CONFIDENTIAL

FROM: J A Dew
British Embassy, Dublin

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cc: PS/PUS-B
PS/Mr Fell-B
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Mr Bell-B
Mr Williams-B
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J. D.

HMA
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MCGIMPSEY BROTHERS, DUBLIN 17 NOVEMBER

1. They were here for a talk Christopher McGimpsey gave at the Mansion House in Dublin. I spent an hour with them beforehand.

2. Michael McGimpsey told me that he had telephoned Martin Mansergh last week, and been surprised to be given a detailed account of what appeared to be a strategy by the Taoiseach to "flush out" the IRA. Mansergh had told him that the Irish Government had decided they could not run with Hume/Adams, neither in substance nor outward form. They were putting proposals indirectly to the IRA that amounted to little more than a seat at the conference table if they gave up violence. They were drafted in terms no reasonable Unionist could object to, Mansergh had said. This process was designed to force them to put up or shut up, in a tight enough timescale to clear the air before the Summit, and not interfere with or queer the pitch for the Ancram Round etc. In domestic political terms, Reynolds could not be seen to have rejected a chance of peace. This process would get him off that hook, if the IRA rejected it, as Mansergh had implied he believed they would.

3. The McGimpseys were clearly very sceptical about all this, but believed Mansergh personally was being sincere. At the very least however Reynolds appeared to them to be backing several horses at the same time.

4. The situation now looked exceptionally confused from Belfast - dangerously so in that uncertainty not only led to violence, but also made politicians more cautious. Molyneaux had, genuinely, at last been on the point of committing himself to a meeting with Spring when the Ard Fheis, and subsequent

statements from the Taoiseach, had made it impossible. The DUP would have had a field day had he persisted. Nonetheless, a three man delegation (Taylor, Trimble, Maginnis?) might now be authorised to come to Dublin, and meet both Spring and Reynolds. Was this worthwhile? I encouraged them to get on with it. They would certainly not be rebuffed, and it could only help stabilise the Irish Government's approach and clear some of the confusion. They could convey to the Irish that they were serious about talks, and not just sitting back to enjoy the fruits of a deal over Maastricht - assumptions which had helped lead the Irish Government to go for "peace" rather than renewed talks.

5. They were very suspicious about what HMG were up to. Why had the Foreign Secretary flown into Belfast recently? There could be no innocent explanation (I tried). What really lay behind the Mansion House speech? (Christopher McGimpsey said he thought it contained nothing new, others in the UUP were still suspicious).

6. They volunteered that next year's European Elections were already a major factor in Paisley's unhelpful behaviour, and would not make life any easier for the UUP.

Spring

7. They believed that (among others) Seamus Mallon had put 'massive' pressure on Reynolds to row back from, or 'clarify' the drafting of Spring's Principle 4. They knew it was no "drafting error". So what was Spring's position now? Reynolds would hang him out to dry if he was not careful. I explained that there had been a conscious, and it seemed successful, effort at the end of last week to get all the key players on the Irish side pulling together.

(SIGNED)
J A Dew