

## Speaking Note

**VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND BY PRESIDENT ROBINSON, 18-19 JUNE 1993**

I have been instructed on behalf of the British Government to represent our serious concern at the proposed inclusion in the projected visit by President Robinson to Northern Ireland of a two hour meeting with community organisations in west Belfast on the afternoon of Friday 18 June.

2. The groups which are organising this event have included in the list of people expected to be present a number of prominent members of Sinn Fein, including some persons who have been convicted of terrorist offences or who are suspected of involvement in support for terrorist activities.

3. A meeting by President Robinson with such persons would do a very grave disservice to community relations in Northern Ireland. It would have the inevitable effect of exacerbating divisions in society there. It would have a truly appalling impact on unionist opinion, as they would see it as a calculated assertion of support by the President personally and by the Irish Government for unconstitutional politics.

4. Such a meeting would also inevitably have an impact on the political standing of the British Government in Northern Ireland, and of the Secretary of State personally. In the circumstances he could not but make clear in public that such a visit, if it goes ahead, was doing so against his specific advice.

5. There is also considerable room for concern about the security implications of such a visit taking place. The Secretary of State would also have to refer to this aspect in his public statement, making clear that by proceeding with the visit the President was ignoring his advice that it was likely to endanger life.



6. In addition the Secretary of State would need to make clear that the full details concerning the proposed visit had only been made available to us three days in advance, precluding any possibility of adjusting the arrangements so as to avoid these difficulties.

7. The Secretary of State is well aware of the profound damage which would be caused to bilateral relations between Britain and Ireland by his having to make such a statement. He therefore earnestly trusts that the President will not go ahead with this element of her proposed visit.

- Mr Thomas
- Mr Ladio
- Mr Williams
- Mr Steele
- Mr Deverell
- Mr Bell
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Wood (L&S)
- Mrs Collins
- Mr Cooke
- Mr Brooker
- Mr Lesch
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Gunn
- Mr Maxwell
- Mr Kyle
- Miss Steele
- Mr F Woods
- Mr Dickinson
- Ms Lodge

Mr Arthur Hill, FCO - 8

PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND, 18-19 JUNE

1. As indicated, I called on the Secretary to the Government late last night and left with him the attached speaking note. Murray was accompanied by Kennedy, who has been studying the practical arrangements for the visit.

2. I said that the note had been prepared by the Northern Ireland Secretary personally, and that I could not say more. In general, we greatly welcomed the President's regard for Northern Ireland, but the proposed event in West Belfast on 18 June was very unpopular. Quite apart from the political and security damage it