

RESTRICTED

FM DUBLIN

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 073.

OF 141354Z FEBRUARY 92

MIPT: NORTHERN IRELAND: DEALING WITH THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT

1. WHILE ANDREWS WAS AT PAINS TO STRESS AN OPEN-MINDED APPROACH TO NORTHERN IRELAND ISSUES AND A WISH FOR CONTINUITY, HE HAD LITTLE MORE DEFINITE TO SAY. INDEED, NEITHER HE NOR THE NEW TAOISEACH NOR THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE HAS MUCH OF A TRACK RECORD. THE TAOISEACH HAS GIVEN LITTLE AWAY IN PUBLIC, EXCEPT FOR EXPLICITLY RULING OUT SINN FEIN PARTICIPATION IN TALKS UNLESS PIRA GIVE UP THEIR CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE (MY TELNO 62). WHILE ANDREWS' RECORD (MY TELNO 65) IS THAT OF A MODERATE, HE MAY TAKE DISPROPORTIONATE INTEREST IN CIVIL RIGHTS/CONFIDENCE ISSUES. FLYNN IS A CONSERVATIVE AND A NATIONALIST.

2. EQUALLY IMPORTANT, THE NEW TEAM'S ONLY GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE OF NORTHERN IRELAND ISSUES HAS BEEN THROUGH REYNOLDS' AND FLYNN'S PARTICIPATION IN HAUGHEY'S CABINET. THEY HAVE A CONSIDERABLE LEARNING CURVE AHEAD OF THEM, NOT ONLY ABOUT THE FACTS OF LIFE IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND BRITISH POLICY THERE, BUT ABOUT HOW TO DO BUSINESS WITH BRITISH MINISTERS. WE CAN EXPECT CAUTION AND SOME SCEPTICISM ABOUT BRITISH MOTIVES AND POLICY. IT WILL BE IMPORTANT NOT TO TAKE FOR GRANTED THE KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE AND TRUST BUILT UP IN THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE WITH COLLINS AND BURKE, AND IN A DIFFERENT WAY WITH HAUGHEY. AN OBVIOUS KEY OBJECTIVE FOR THE FIRST MINISTERIAL CONTACTS WITH REYNOLDS' TEAM, BEGINNING WITH YOUR BILATERAL ON 18 FEBRUARY, WILL BE TO LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR A RELATIONSHIP OF CONFIDENCE.

3. MY RECOMMENDATION, THEREFORE, IS TO USE THE FIRST MEETINGS NOT SO MUCH TO MAKE SPECIFIC POINTS ON NORTHERN IRELAND, BUT TO GET ACROSS THE FUNDAMENTALS:

(A) REASSURE THE IRISH OF BRITISH COMMITMENT TO THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT, TO WORKING WITH THE IRISH GOVERNMENT, AND TO THE IRISH QUESTION IN GENERAL (IE WE TAKE IT SERIOUSLY):

(B) STRESS HMG'S VIEW THAT SECURITY MEASURES, POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC/SOCIAL PROGRESS ARE COMPLEMENTARY:

Instructions for completion of Dummy Card

(C) EMPHASISE THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF UNIONIST CONSENT. ANY PROPOSAL INVOLVING THE UNIONISTS MUST BE ACCEPTABLE TO THEM. THIS IS NOT CAVING IN TO THE UNIONIST VETO, BUT RECOGNITION OF REALITY:

(D) GO BRIEFLY OVER THE POSITION REACHED ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE:

(E) EXPLAIN FRANKLY OUR SECURITY PROBLEMS IN THE NORTH, AND OUR RELIANCE ON IRISH CO-OPERATION IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST:

(F) KILL ANY RED HERRINGS OR MISCONCEPTIONS WHICH MAY SURFACE (EG ON SECURITY MEASURES IN THE NORTH, THE NELSON CASE, ACCOMPANIMENT ETC).

BLATHERWICK

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NORTHERN IRELAND

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