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SEC 25 MAY 1995
CENT SEC 1/53/S



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PS/SofSHI
PS/Michael Antram
PS/Sir John Wheeler
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2. Mr Graham.

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Received 24/5.

SUBJECT: VISIT OF THE PRINCE OF WALES: SCENE SETTER

Summary

1. The visit of the Prince of Wales comes at a propitious time in British/Irish relations. The Government and people here will warmly welcome HRH, even if a small minority may use the occasion to stage a protest. Serious commentators believe that the visit symbolises an improved and more equal relationship between the two countries. Used wisely it could be of momentous significance.

Detail

2. On 31 May to 1 June, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales will visit Ireland. It is the first time that a member of the Royal Family has undertaken an official programme in the Republic since Independence in 1921. Such a visit has been in prospect for the past year or two; but it falls at a particularly apposite time. The Taoiseach, Mr Bruton, told me last week that he believed that the relationship between the two islands had never been closer than at present. Many will endorse his view.

3. This is a complex relationship in which appearances can often be misleading. Its peculiar intimacy has been dictated by geographical proximity and centuries of shared history, reinforced by innumerable family connections. Virtually every Irish family has a relative living in Britain (usually England); a great many British people (including myself) have some kind of Irish ancestry. On occasion the visitor feels as if he were in some distant English county, for instance when passionate discussion among a group of Irish people about "their team" turns out to refer to Liverpool Football Club.

4. But intimacy does not always imply harmony. The relationship has all too frequently been marred by strife and discord. Over the centuries, the British Crown has been seen by some in Ireland, unjustly, as the focus of all their troubles, whether the Elizabethan wars of the sixteenth century, the plantation of Protestants in the North and the Penal Laws of the seventeenth, the Act of Union of 1800, the tragic famine of 1845-9, the execution of the leaders of the

1916 Easter Rising, or the subsequent activities of the Black and Tans. More recently, profound differences in attitude to the partition of the Island, and developments in the North, including maltreatment by the Stormont Government of the Catholic minority there, have inhibited the development of an amicable relationship between two close neighbours.

5. Today earlier passions may be tempered, but misunderstanding and misplaced prejudice still persist on both sides. Part of the reason for this lies in the disparity in size of the two countries. It is as if the Irish were looking at Britain through a telescope, viewing it as unduly large, while believing that the British were seeing them through the other end as disproportionately small. It is this disparity, coupled with centuries of perceived injustice, which lies beneath much of the lingering hostility felt by certain Irish people against Britain and the British. It would be wrong to exaggerate the extent and depth of this hostility, but equally wrong to pretend it does not exist.

6. Since Independence the Irish have been concerned to carve out their own identity as distinct and separate from the British. In this their Celtic heritage, including their promotion of the Irish language, is an important factor. So too is their desire to be taken seriously on the international scene as independent neutrals. In many spheres they already are. In the arts and business their achievements speak for themselves, particularly among younger people. In the UN the Irish have gained respect as peacekeepers. Membership of the European Union has not only brought very great economic benefit, but has also enabled the Irish to meet the British as equal partners in the Union. Nevertheless, Irish politicians and bureaucrats can still lack self-confidence, exhibiting on occasion a prickliness and sensitivity surprising to the newcomer. Many Irish people, and not only the younger ones, are also affected by an increasing discomfort about relationships between the Catholic Church and society. Not only do they wish to move into a modern more secular society, but even traditionalists find it hard to preserve their respect for a hierarchy rocked by one scandal after another.

7. Whatever the complexities of the British/Irish relationship, two things are not in doubt. First, Mr Bruton's comment about the closeness of the relationship is right. Patient efforts in recent years by a succession of Ministers on both sides, combined with the eventual realisation on the part of Sinn Fein that violence stiffens British resolve rather than the reverse, have delivered the Joint declaration, a ceasefire which has endured for almost nine months, and the Joint Framework Document.

8. Of course many obstacles remain. There are major differences of perception about the best way forward, with the Irish side pressing for greater British flexibility towards Sinn Fein, for example over the decommissioning of weapons; while the British know that each concession risks alienating the Unionists. Unexpected developments can also threaten progress. The role of the Irish Americans is not always helpful. The fragility of successive Irish coalition Governments can deflect attention from the peace process. Changes in the ministerial team in either Ireland or Britain can threaten carefully nurtured personal relationships. Following the Framework Document, however, there is at least an improved understanding between the two Governments about the probable nature of an eventual settlement.

9. Antagonism to the Crown has diminished dramatically, being confined to a minority of extreme Republicans. This change in attitude was recently encapsulated by Eamon de Valera's grandson, Eamon O'Cuiv, who is a member of the Dail. When interviewed on television about the Royal Visit he suggested that the Crown could serve as a link between the Unionists and the Republic: he said he had long advocated that one way of achieving this would be for Ireland to become a member of the Commonwealth, retaining its own President, with the British Monarch playing a special role as head of the Commonwealth. The Tanaiste, Mr Spring, has also said to me that he could envisage some kind of associate membership of the Commonwealth.

— DeValera's document no. 2 of 1921 !!

10 It is certain too that the Prince of Wales will receive an enormously warm welcome. There may be demonstrations, given HRH's position as Colonel in Chief of the Parachute Regiment, and the latter's role in Bloody Sunday. But they will represent the voice of a small minority, and on past form will be kept firmly in check by the Garda. The vast majority, including the many who wish to atone for the murder of Lord Mountbatten, will want to ensure that their Royal visitor receives the kind of welcome for which Ireland is justly famed.

11. This is certainly the intention of all those organising the programme, which now combines just the right mix of events. It will enable the Prince of Wales to meet a cross section of Irish society, both at the Queen's Birthday Party and at the Taoiseach's dinner; to see something of Dublin's history and architecture, including the Book of Kells; to promote British commercial interests, in opening the new BTA offices; to discuss the Prince's particular interests with professionals involved in youth projects and urban regeneration; to meet the President privately; and to see something of Ireland's prehistoric heritage at Newgrange.

12. Both the Taoiseach and the Tanaiste, have made plain their personal commitment to the success of the visit. They, in common with other serious commentators, recognise it as a milestone on the road to a more harmonious and even relationship between the two countries and the two islands. It was fortuitous that the announcement of HRH's visit

coincided with Ireland's commemoration on 28 April of the Holocaust and the end of the Second World War. The decision even to hold such an event was a personal and courageous step on Mr Bruton's part. He went further by speaking movingly on that occasion about a future in which Irish people in the South would acknowledge their shared British history, while those in the North would learn to accept their Irish heritage.

13. There are many generously intentioned people in Ireland who hope that the Prince of Wales will use his visit to express his and Britain's aspirations that the people of these islands can work together as friends. They would receive with heartfelt gratitude some acknowledgement that over the centuries there have been many errors on all sides. This would effectively throw into sharp relief the failure of Sinn Fein to show remorse for their actions which are on a wholly different scale, and place us even more firmly on the moral high ground.

14. A forthright apology - certainly for any specific incident - would not (not) be appropriate. HRH might however intimate that we all regret what has happened in the past, and that we are now moving forward as partners and friends in a new relationship, to a new century. Seen in this perspective the visit of HRH is of momentous significance.

15. MIFT contains suggested speaking note for a short speech by HRH at the Mansion House on 1 June on these lines.

16. FCO please advance to Lamport (St James Palace), Lever (Cabinet Office), Lyne (No. 10 Downing Street), and Lamont (RID).

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4/24/95
Michael Antram
Sir John Wheeler
RUS
Mr Fall
Mr Logo DUS(8)
Mr Watkins
Wood
Dwyer
J Steele
M Williams
Perry
MacCabe
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received 24/5

SUBJECT: MIPT: VISIT OF THE PRINCE OF WALES: SUGGESTED
SPEAKING NOTE.

- I am delighted and honoured to be here in Dublin, one of Europe's most vibrant and gracious cities. I am mindful of the happy circumstances that have made it possible for me to fulfil my long-standing wish to visit Ireland, a beautiful and proud country that has done so much not only to develop its own rich Celtic culture but also to contribute to the culture of the world.
- It is fitting that I should start my programme today in the Mansion House, very much the heart of the city. A glance around this elegant building reminds us how the histories of our two islands are so intimately entwined, and how much we have given to each other.
- These are momentous times. For the first time in a generation there is the prospect of lasting peace throughout this island. And the determination to build on that is evident both North and South. As we work together as good neighbours and friends, we all regret what has gone wrong over the centuries. We are striving to find the expressions to put behind us the mistakes, the personal tragedies.
- Our efforts are reinforced by the countless ties of friendship and family relationships that bind the people of these islands together. We are bound so closely that none of us can ever be truly foreign to each other.
- I am here in Dublin not only to see an historic and architecturally exciting city. I am here to meet and learn from as many people as I can. I am especially keen to see how you as a city are tackling problems which we both share.
- I have received so many generous invitations from all over Ireland and I am sorry that I cannot take up most of them. I must come again.