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AMPASÁID NA hÉIREANN. LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

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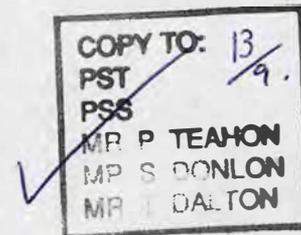
Telephone: 0171-235 2171

Direct Line: 0171-201 2

Fax: 0171-245 6961

12 September, 1996.

Mr. Seán O hUiginn,
Second Secretary,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
St. Stephen's Green,
DUBLIN 2.



Dear Secretary,

Conversation with Mr. Albert Reynolds T.D.

Mr. Reynolds was the principal guest speaker at the University of Surrey in Guildford last night. The occasion was the Leggett lecture, an annual event sponsored by the University, to, as the University's material puts it, "deal with some aspect of human experience given by an eminent authority". Previous lectures have been given by such people as Hugh Trevor Roper, Peter Medawar, Roy Jenkins and Cardinal Basil Hume. The subject of Mr. Reynolds's talk was "Making Peace in Ireland" and I was invited by the University to propose the vote of thanks.

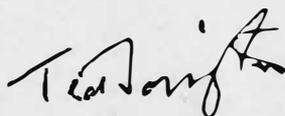
The bulk of the talk was given over to an account of the negotiations leading up to the Downing St. Declaration and the IRA ceasefire and dealt in particular with Mr. Reynolds' own involvement in those events and his relationship with the key participants, including the Prime Minister and the leaders of the Nationalist and Unionist communities. The breakdown of the ceasefire and subsequent events, including Drumcree, were covered. Such criticism as there was was directed at the British failure to capitalise on the process during the period of the ceasefire and the opportunity that was missed in the Summer and

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Autumn of last year. The most significant comment on current events was his statement that he did not share the optimism about an imminent ceasefire and an early entry of Sinn Féin to the Belfast talks.

I had an opportunity later to ask him about this last remark. He said that he had a lengthy meeting recently with Joe Cahill who told him that there were no grounds for believing that the Army Council were seriously considering a restoration of the ceasefire and that he (Cahill) did not think that the circumstances were there to enable them to make such a decision. For Cahill two things, at least, would be necessary: a resolution of the decommissioning issue that guaranteed that a handover of weapons would not be required and that the decommissioning question would not be at the top of the talks agenda. Second, evidence that the talks were serious. Mr. Reynolds said that there was "no way" that the IRA or the loyalist paramilitaries would agree to a weapons handover before a negotiated settlement and it was not practical politics to think that they would. He also felt that if the talks could take up one or two issues of concern to Sinn Féin and demonstrate on the part of the parties currently in the process a serious intent to deal with them, then this would give Sinn Féin something with which they could go back to the IRA. The problem at the moment, as he saw it, was that Sinn Féin has nothing concrete to offer the IRA other than the risk of the Republican Movement's being drawn into a negotiation on arms. In these circumstances, and in the context of the British election campaign, which would increasingly constrain the freedom of movement of all the parties, Mr Reynolds saw little hope for an early restoration of the ceasefire.

Yours sincerely,



Ted Barrington
Ambassador