



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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VE 13/5

PST: PSS, Messrs. Teahon,  
Donlon & Dalton;  
Ambassadors London &  
Washington: Joint Secretary;  
Counsellors A-I

(25)

Secure Fax: 460

13 May 1997

To: HQ  
For: Second Secretary O hUiginn

From: Belfast  
From: Joint Secretary

NB: For security reasons, the timing  
& logistics of the PM's visit are being kept  
No of pages including this one: 2 <sup>Confidential</sup>  
we should avoid  
all comment on them

Tasiearh  
hvk  
14.5.97

SOH  
13/5

Subj: Visit by PM Blair to Northern Ireland

1. To confirm, we have been told on a strictly confidential basis that the Prime Minister's visit to Northern Ireland will take place on Friday of this week. No details of the programme for his one-day visit are to hand as yet.
2. According to my British opposite number, the major policy speech which the Prime Minister is to deliver (venue and timing not yet known) will not break new ground. It will set out the basic principles and objectives of the new Government in terms which are familiar from recent articles and statements by Tony Blair and Mo Mowlam and, in particular, from the latter's arrival statement (3 May) and the Queen's Speech tomorrow. My colleague suggested that it would contain "no unwelcome surprises" from our point of view.
3. I expressed the hope that the Prime Minister would display sensitivity towards the nationalist as well as the Unionist tradition and that the values and needs of both communities would be presented in balanced terms. Bell replied that one of the points which the Prime Minister was likely to make was that no settlement could be achieved in Northern Ireland unless both communities were brought along together.
4. He predicted a strong reaffirmation of the consent principle in familiar terms. The Prime Minister would also underline his commitment to getting inclusive talks underway as soon as possible and reproduce familiar language on the terms for Sinn Féin entry. There would also be language emphasising the commitment of the Labour Government to eradicating discrimination of all forms. The importance of upholding the rule of law would be highlighted in the section dealing with parades.
5. My colleague did not know how the speech would be prepared. Under the ancien

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regime, initial NIO drafts tended to be worked on by No. 10 and the Prime Minister himself. The arrangements under the new dispensation are not yet known but, as far as Bell is aware, no draft has been requested of the NIO so far.