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IMMEDIATE

SECURE FAX

To: Mr. Sean Donlon
Dept. of an Taoiseach

From: David Cooney,
Department of Foreign Affairs

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Anglo-Irish Report

— Telephone call from Quentin Thomas

File

PS1, PSS, S/S O hUiginn,
Counsellors A-I, Section.
Messrs Teahon, Donlon &
Dallon, Ambassadors
London & Washington, Joint
Secretary

Confidential

Telephone call from Quentin Thomas

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Quentin Thomas contacted me this afternoon in the absence of Mr. Ó hUiginn to discuss the letter sent by Gerry Adams to Tony Blair via John Hume. Thomas was in downbeat mood and offered the opinion that Sinn Féin had overbid their hand. He said that the letter, which ran to three pages, sought further clarification on a whole range of issues, including decommissioning, the time frame for negotiations, meetings with British Ministers following a ceasefire, numerous confidence-building measures, including prisoners, emergency legislation, parades, social and economic issues, equal treatment for the Irish language and even the position of the British Government on certain aspects of the Joint Framework Document.

Thomas regretted that this was not the kind of response which they expected, particularly in the circumstances following last Monday's killings. He said that much of the letter could be presented as an attempt to enter into pre-negotiation against the prospect of a ceasefire. However, given that this was clearly unrealistic, his overall impression was that the letter was a stalling exercise designed to allow Sinn Féin to claim that they were still awaiting clarification on their concerns.

Thomas said that his inclination was to advise Minister's to respond fairly quickly, pointing out that many of the issues raised had been covered in the aide-memoire and that others were clearly matters to be dealt with in the negotiations. As regards decommissioning, he said that they would refer to the joint paper, which he presumed would usefully find its way to Sinn Féin.

Thomas stressed that any reply would probably be directed to John Hume, rather than to Adams. He indicated that he had already been in contact with Hume to tell him that Adams' letter was seen as an "overbid" and, according to Thomas, Hume had agreed with him.

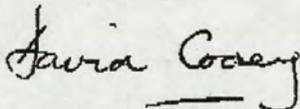
While admitting to Thomas that his news was not encouraging, I undertook to come back to

him if we had any views on how the British might best proceed. Having spoken to Mr. Ó hUiginn, I rang Thomas and put forward the following suggestions:

- (i) the British should sit on the paper for a few days and should not rush into a response;
- (ii) they should talk to Hume and make their views known; and
- (iii) they should go through the paper and distinguish between what could be readily clarified and what could be construed as an attempt at pre-negotiation.

Thomas thanked me for these points, without revealing any apparent enthusiasm for the advice they contained, and repeated his concern that Adams' letter revealed a lack of seriousness on the part of Sinn Féin. He agreed to my request to provide us with a copy of the Adams letter, mischievously expressing surprise that we had not received a copy through other channels.

Following my conversations with Thomas, I learned that Downing St. are telling the press that the Prime Minister will make a statement on Northern Ireland next week after briefing the other party leaders and that he will publish the text of the aide-memoire presented to Sinn Féin.



David Cooney

20 June 1997