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Prime Minister (4)

Mr Archer, RID

FOREIGN SECRETARY

Meeting between Secretary of State and Irish Foreign
Minister: Brussels: 7 February

The Secretary of State had a short meeting with Dick Spring in the margins of yesterday's FAC. He said that he had had a rough ride in the United States. It had been impossible to handle the Adams publicity offensive, given that one did not know in advance whether he might be willing to come up with something worthwhile. He would welcome some light being shed on why the Irish Government had been positive about the Adams visa application. Spring said that Adams had clearly generated a media circus. There had been some expectation in advance that he would make the right noises, even if he did not say all the right things. There was some disappointment at the outcome, but the Irish/American lobby still claimed that good would come out of the visit. They still saw Adams as somebody who wanted to lead the Catholics to a peaceful settlement in the North. If they were right, the visa issue would look like a reasonable decision. In reply to a question, Spring said that, in his own judgement, Adams' commitment to peace was genuine.

Spring then gave a briefer sketch of where things stood on the talks. He said that he had written an article at the weekend (? in the Sunday Press) which made clear his commitment to continuing the talks process. We needed officials to establish a framework, but without setting hard and fast deadlines. He saw the next key date as being the Ard Fheis on 25-26 February. This would be an opportunity for the IRA to respond to the Joint Declaration. Despite the initial reactions of Adams and McGuinness, surprising people were still telling the Irish Government that things could come right over the JD. Spring said he was sometimes pressed over the need to get on with this. His reply was that 3 or 4 weeks were a short period in the context of Irish history.

R. Wain Stagg

08 February 1994

(C R V Stagg)

cc : PS
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