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16 June 1997

FAXED - To AM's Party in Amsterdam
British Embassy Via London
Washington 17/6/97
(0730)

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Dear David,

REACTION TO THE LURGAN SHOOTINGS

1. Earlier today Mary Ann Peters was discussing with me a draft Presidential statement (attached) condemning the murders in Lurgan. This says nothing about future US policy towards Sinn Fein. At the subsequent White House press briefing the spokesman (Mike McCurry) was pressed on this point: he replied that the US would maintain contacts which were helpful to the peace process "but sooner or later it becomes clear who's willing to help the process and who's not". It would seem that even the US's patience with Sinn Fein will eventually run out.
2. I wonder whether thought has been given to the option of publishing the aide memoire which was put to Sinn Fein over the weekend? The Unionists would, no doubt, go to town: the 6 week suggestion was outrageous; the text showed that HMG had been engaged in negotiation despite all that had been said; the (predictable) outcome was a testament to British naivety, etc. But Unionist reaction would perhaps be muted by the knowledge that the initiative had now been derailed, and that there was no immediate danger of Sinn Fein being invited in on these terms: (which would have been unacceptably generous, in Unionist opinion). The advantage of publishing would be that the public (including the US public) would see how far HMG had been prepared to go to draw Sinn Fein into the talks. In the light of HMG's initiative the IRA response is hard to read other than as a desperate effort to bury a proposition which would have put them on the spot. So long as the background is concealed, Sinn Fein's publicity machine may be able to convince people that the British were stringing them along, - and that in these circumstances frustration spilled over into violence.
3. If the 'settlement train' is leaving without Sinn Fein we need to convince people - here and in the UK - that HMG did all it possibly could to achieve inclusive talks.

P.S I attach
a (helpful)
Kennedy statement.

Yours ever,
Anthony
Anthony Cary

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cc: Mr Watkins, NIO(B)
Mr Wood, NIO(B)
PS/No 10
PS/S of S NI
PS/Mr Murphy, NIO Minister
Mr Lamont, RID, FCO
Mr Priestley, NAD, FCO
Mr Clarke, Dublin

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