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Title: Department of Foreign Affairs memorandum, possibly written by Hugh J McCann, Secretary, describing secret contacts that Mr [Harold] Wilson, leader of the British Labour Party, had made with leaders of the Provisional IRA [Irish Republican Army].

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SECRET

On the Minister's instructions I called in the British Ambassador, Sir John Peck, to-day and told him of certain contacts with the IRA which the Minister heard obliquely Mr. Wilson had made while in Dublin at the beginning of the week.

The Ambassador told me that he already knew about this. The Minister for Justice had mentioned it to him after the dinner party in Iveagh House yesterday evening but, apart altogether from this, Mr. Wilson had mentioned his intentions in this matter to the Ambassador before arranging the contact. The Ambassador said that, while he naturally could not tell Mr. Wilson what to do or what not to do, he struck a note of caution and strongly advised Mr. Wilson to tell the Taoiseach before carrying out his intention.

When the Ambassador saw Mr. Wilson before his departure the latter told him that he had had contact with the IRA. The Ambassador understood that those involved were the top brass in the Provisionals. The Ambassador enquired whether Mr. Wilson had taken his advice and mentioned the matter to the Taoiseach beforehand. Mr. Wilson stated that he had done so and had not received an adverse reaction. The Ambassador volunteered the information, however, that Mr. Wilson, being the type he is, may have done this in such an "opaque" way that the point might not have fully registered with the Taoiseach. I expressed doubt that the point would have registered as the Minister was anxious that I should make it clear to the Ambassador that we were not involved in this contact and, indeed, it could be embarrassing that Mr. Wilson should have made this contact on his visit to Dublin. I told the Ambassador that I was mentioning this matter for his information only and I was not registering a complaint.

The Ambassador expressed appreciation of this and added that, while he doubted the wisdom of Mr. Wilson meeting these people, he thought that what Mr. Wilson had said to ~~them~~ (as reported to him by Mr. Wilson) was perhaps useful. According to what Mr. Wilson told the Ambassador he had made the following three points to the people he was speaking to:-

1. their proposal that all those interned should be released immediately was unrealistic and was just "not on";
2. similarly, the IRA proposal that the British Army should be taken out was not realistic as it could well lead to a massacre in the North;
3. Mr. Wilson urged the IRA to cease intimidating the SDLP so that they would be free to enter into talks.

16 Márta 1972