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From: Veronica Sutherland
Date: 16 July 1996

CC EO
JH

To: Mr Thomas (L&B)

cc: PS/SofS (L&B)
PS/Michael Ancram (L&B)
PS/Sir J Wheeler (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Sir D Fell
Mr Legge
Mr Bell
Mr Leach
Mr Steele
Mr Ray, Liaison
Mr Maccabe
Mr Perry
Mr Stephens
Mr Lamont, RID
Mr Budd, Cabinet Office - by fax.
Mr Holmes, No. 10 - by fax.

NBpm

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JH 16/7.

CONVERSATION WITH SEAN DONLON

1. I telephoned Sean Donlon this morning to ask for the Irish Government's reaction to the Secretary of State's statement in the House yesterday. Donlon said that while some aspects were to be welcomed (eg the announcement of the forthcoming IGC and a body to look at marches), there had been some disappointment on the Irish side that there had been no admission that mistakes had been made.
2. The Prime Minister's interview on Panorama had been appreciated on that score. They had also been impressed by his expressed determination to get on with the peace process and draw a line under recent events. Irish Ministers very much hoped that discussions this week between the Taoiseach and Sir Patrick Mayhew would be productive. It was absolutely crucial that the two Governments worked together to resolve difficulties.
3. Donlon reverted again to the mood of the nationalists in the Republic, including amongst normally moderate people. The perception that nationalists in the North had been treated unduly harshly by the RUC remained deeply entrenched in the Republic.
4. Donlon emphasised that the Taoiseach too wanted to look forward rather than backwards and was particularly keen to ensure that there was no repeat of last week's events in relation to the forthcoming Apprentice Boys' March on 13 August. John Hume told the Irish Government that there was a good possibility that a local agreement could be brokered. He would do what he could to achieve this.

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5. We then turned to the Irish Government's talks with the SDLP last night. He said their mood was angry. They felt that not only had the nationalists had been badly treated in Garvaghy Road, but also they were being badly treated by Trimble, Paisley and McCartney in the all-party talks. The Unionists were trying to frustrate the talks. The SDLP did not wish to participate in a sterile process and would walk out unless there was progress.

6. The Taoiseach and his colleagues had tried to convince the SDLP that it was important to continue talks for the next two weeks. It should be possible to sort out procedures and the agenda in that period. Substantive talks might then start in September. It was regrettable (if understandable) that they had turned their back on the Forum but they must continue in the talks themselves.

Comment

7. Donlon expressed clearly the Irish desire to see the two Governments working together. But initial exchanges between the two Governments will almost certainly be coloured, on the Irish side, by the widely-held perception here that mistakes were made and that "parity of esteem" is in question.

(Signed)

Veronica Sutherland
ambassador

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