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cc FA/APS
Ress

CONFIDENTIAL

FROM: R I Clarke
BE Dublin

DATE: 25 June 1997

cc: PS/Paul Murphy (L&B)
 PS/Adam Ingram (L&B)
 PS/PUS (L&B)
 PS/Sir David Fell
 Mr Stephens
 Mr Watkins
 Mr Bell
 Mr Beeton
 Mr Hill
 Mr Brooker
 Mr Maccabe
 Mr Steele
 Mr Ray (via Leach)
 Mr Leach
 Mr Perry
 Mr Lavery
 Mr Whysall
 Mr Warner
 Mr Budd, Cabinet Office
 Mr Lamont, RID
 Ms Bharucha
 Mr Holmes, No. 10
 Mr Cary, Washington

File
26/6.

Mr Thomas

MARTIN MANSEERGH

1. I talked to Martin Mansergh this morning.

Decommissioning

2. He expressed satisfaction at the way this had been handled thus far. But he went on to say that the Prime Minister's statement in the House this afternoon represented a major challenge for us, in that that statement would have to successfully come to terms with all of the pressures that were now being brought to bear upon us. He had been in touch with Sinn Fein this morning. He said that Pat Doherty's cautiously positive statements on Prime Time and Radio 4 yesterday evening had not been done off the cuff (as is so often the case with Doherty) but had been officially endorsed by the leadership. Though both Doherty and McLaughlin had both publicly denied having seen the detail of our decommissioning paper, Sinn Fein were in fact, well aware of its content. In the context of this cautiously positive response, it was therefore important that whatever we said about decommissioning stuck very closely to the carefully crafted language in the text. In his view, it would be "fatal" to appear to override that document in any way, in that Sinn Fein would latch on to any such statement as constituting the

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official position of the British Government. Sinn Fein recognised that hard things would continue to be said about the Lurgan killings and could have no quarrel with that. But they still needed to be reassured that the application of the joint text on decommissioning would not give rise to anything that could be interpreted as new pre-conditions for Sinn Fein either outside or inside the talks.

3. Mansergh went on to give a specific example. He said that in his most recent contact, he had been questioned quite closely why "progress" was sought in some areas while "due progress" was sought on decommissioning. Did that mean that a more rigorous test would be applied to developments on decommissioning? Mansergh said that he had tried to disabuse them of this notion (and thought he had succeeded). But the question itself demonstrated the extent to which every word in the text and in our statements, would be crawled over for signs of hidden meanings and conditions.

Exchanges with Adams

4. Mansergh remained confident that things were still moving in the right direction despite the Lurgan killings. But there would be no immediate ceasefire. In his opinion, Adams latest letter to the Prime Minister (of which he had a copy on his desk) should not be seen in terms of raising new obstacles. It was true that both Adams and McGuinness had a "tick-off" mentality when it came to their dealings with the British (and Irish) Government. But he thought that the list in the latest letter could be dealt with satisfactorily with general as opposed to specific commitments. On the specifics in Adams' "package of points" as he termed it, Mansergh had gained the impression from several sources that the one on the Irish language could be dealt with by some generally positive statement perhaps referring back to the framework document. The same could be said on prisoners. Mansergh recalled that when this arose in 1994, no specific commitments had been entered into and that reassurance had been given on the lines of a formula such as "if the ceasefire beds down, this issue will be dealt with in a progressive spirit". Mansergh recognised that the Irish had a much simpler task in providing specific reassurance on this point. But he said that if the right atmospherics could be conveyed, e.g. in a public statement by the Secretary of State, then expectations would probably be met. As far as any private response to Adams went, he said that a pledge to "tidy up" previous commitments (ie on transfers) plus the right sort of mood music should suffice.

5. I subsequently spoke on the telephone to both you and John Holmes.

(Signed)

R I Clarke