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June 1980

*Mr Murphy
You will wish
to see. We have a
file on the
Balcombe St. four.
Gerrard
3/7*

Dear Gerry

I enclose copy of statements which I recently acquired of confessions by Harry Duggan, Edward Butler, Joseph O'Connell and Brendan Dowd (the "Balcombe Street" terrorists) in which they claim responsibility for the Woolwich bombing and, in the case of the latter two, the Guildford bombing.

As you will recall, Paul Hill, Gerry Conlon, Paul Armstrong and Carol Richardson received life sentences for these bombings on the evidence of confessions which were later retracted during their trial. Gerry Conlon implicated Annie Maguire in his confession and she and her family were subsequently convicted on possession of explosives charges. The confessions of the Balcombe St. Four state that Conlon and the others were totally innocent.

There is, as you are aware, considerable doubt about the technical evidence on which the Maguires were convicted. It also follows in logic, of course, that if Gerry Conlon was innocent then so were the rest of the Maguire family. Likewise, if the Maguires were innocent then so probably was Gerry Conlon. In that context, the four enclosed confessions are of interest. At their trial, the prosecution implicitly took the view that the confessions were an attempt to exonerate guilty comrades and this was also the view taken at subsequent appeals of the Guildford Four and Mrs. Maguire. It was later argued by friends of the Maguire family and the Guildford Four that the police had deliberately attempted to obscure forensic evidence linking the Balcombe St. Four with the Guildford and Woolwich bombings.

I have not cross checked the confessions in great detail but they will be useful for your file.

Yours sincerely

Gerrard
Gerard Corr
First Secretary

Mr. Gerry O'Connor
Anglo-Irish Section
Department of Foreign Affairs