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10154

FROM: JONATHAN M RODELL
PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L)
21 AUGUST 1992

ASST SEC GEN
MM 49518
21 AUG 1992

- cc: PS Secretary of State (L&B) - B
- PS Mr Feen - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Ledlie - B
- Mr Alston - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Deverell - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Petch - B

PS/PUS (L&B) - B

SINN FEIN: CONTACT WITH SIR EDWARD HEATH

~~cc: Mr Walker~~
Mr Adams
Mr & Mrs Murphy

Nick Edgar, PS/Sir Edward Heath, rang me yesterday afternoon to ask what I could tell him about a certain Martin McGuinness. I explained that McGuinness was a leading figure in Sinn Fein and a close associate of Gerry Adams; that it was widely believed that he was also a central figure in PIRA; that he had previously been seen as one of the "hard men" of the Republican movement but that recent newspaper reports had suggested that his position was softening slightly and that he was interested in recruiting either Mr Brooke or Sir Edward to act as some kind of mediator.

2. Edgar revealed that Sir Edward had indeed received a letter from McGuinness. This had been some time ago and so far he had sent only an acknowledgement. His interest had been awakened, however, by reports that Dr Paisley was claiming that the idea had the support of the Government. [This seems to be a reference to remarks Paisley made on the steps of Stormont Castle after his meeting with the Secretary of State on 11 August - extracts of the transcript are attached for reference]. He was now wondering how to respond.

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3. I told Edgar that the Secretary of State would be only too happy to talk to Sir Edward about the matter and encouraged him to do his best to steer the former Premier towards such a meeting. He promised to contact me early next week when he had an opportunity to speak to Sir Edward about the matter.

4. I made it clear that McGuinness was not someone who either Ministers or officials would be prepared to speak to and that the question of contacts with Sinn Fein was a very sensitive one, particularly in the context of the current Talks. I also mentioned that Mr Brooke had touched base with the Office about the approach he had received from McGuinness.

Signed

JONATHAN M RODELL
PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L)
OAB EXTN 6461
21 AUGUST 1992

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