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FROM: QUENTIN THOMAS
Political Director (L)
19 June 1997
ID/111

UNDER/ SEC 854/6.
19 JUN 1997
CENT SEC

ASST 68 371/6
SEC 20 JUN 1997
CENT SEC

PUS (L&B)

- cc PS/Secretary of State (L&B)
- PS/Mr Murphy (L&B)
- PS/Sir David Fell
- Mr Steele
- Mr Bell
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Beeton
- Mr Brooker
- Mr Hill
- Mr Lavery
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Lamont, RID
- HMA, Dublin
- Mr Budd, Cabinet Office
- Mr Holmes, No 10
- Mr Warner

Noted.
20/6.
M. note x: to
indication as to acceptance
but I think it is
implicit.
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LUNCH WITH MARTIN MANSERGH

19.6

We had a useful and agreeable discussion with Martin Mansergh at lunch today.

2. He had already received our latest version of the paper on decommissioning and although he did not wish to get into detailed textual exchange he was broadly supportive. He indicated that Fianna Fail have made clear that they are happy to leave the detailed negotiations to the present Government and the DFA, who are of course consulting them, and they have no objections to the paper being tabled early if the present Government and its officials decide that that is the right thing to do. If that is done the incoming Fianna Fail government will not resile from it.

3. You suggested that before we came to a final decision on that it might be a good idea for the Prime Minister and Mr Ahern to speak on the telephone. That might well be a good idea but Mr Mansergh's reaction made it clear that there would be no insistence on it on their side: if the present Irish Government moves ahead they will be happy to accept the commitments made when they come to government.

4. We made clear ourselves that quite apart from the need to go round the loop once more with Mr Trimble, we might want to hold back any final decision on the best time

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to table the paper until we knew what had been decided about making the aide memoire given to Sinn Féin public, and what reaction that publication evoked.

5. Mansergh generally declared that he remained cautiously hopeful of a serious ceasefire from Sinn Féin, but that he was not confident of his ability to read their intentions. He had had the previous day some exchange with a "middle level" person in Sinn Féin. He gathered that the questions they had on the aide memoire focused on:

- the entry procedures. Mansergh seemed entirely reassured when we made clear that the aide memoire envisaged Ministerial meetings after a ceasefire but before Sinn Féin were invited to join the process;
- the possibility of a decommissioning trap being sprung before Sinn Féin joined the process. We went through what the aide memoire envisaged, and what is in the paper now close to being agreed with the Irish side, and said that we could see no trap. Of course it might be the case that if decommissioning remained on the table in the opening plenary Sinn Féin would simply have to join that discussion. On the other hand if our paper had been agreed then Sinn Féin would join the strands though they would first have to make the commitments envisaged in our paper;
- we discussed, though it was not clear to me whether this was at the instigation of his Sinn Féin interlocutor, the scenario if the process broke down. We emphasised that once Sinn Féin had been invited they would be fully accredited participants in the political process, whatever form it took;
- we spoke about prisoners as a crucial confidence building measure. Rather to our surprise Mansergh made it clear that he would not himself expect very significant early release moves until some two or three years into a well established ceasefire.

6. Mansergh made clear that he had urged on Sinn Féin the need for restraint over Drumcree and parades generally, particularly in the wake of this week's shootings.

7. Mansergh made clear that the new Government would want to keep some channel to Sinn Féin open. He was not sure how this would be done, given the recent focus on the issue.

8. Mansergh said he hoped that Ahern as Taoiseach could meet the Prime Minister in his first week. He agreed that this was a higher priority than an early IGC. He also mentioned that Ahern had been invited to the ICTU Conference in Belfast on 4 July. |x

(Signed)

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