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Date: 8 June 1998
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JSA

-- Conversation with Secretary of State

Mr. Teahon
S.H. 9.6.98.

CONFIDENTIAL

Conversation with Secretary of State

1. In the absence of the Minister in South Africa, the Secretary of State telephoned over the weekend to review recent developments. She said she would be following up quickly with the Minister, with the intention of having a private session to take an overview of where we are on the implementation process.

2. The Secretary of State asked for our assessment of recent developments. I said we were very unhappy at the operation of the consultation process between us. The selection of the Policing Commission was a sad and sorry example of what was wrong with our consultation. It was vital that both Governments should feel comfortable with the composition of key Commissions of this kind; instead, the British Government had gone on a solo-run and had left nationalists worried and disillusioned about the implementation of the Agreement. The membership of the Commission was simply unbalanced and, in particular, contained no-one with street credibility in the nationalist community.

3. The wider issue now must be to ensure that a fully satisfactory consultation process was put back in place between us and, equally importantly, that the British side ensured that any public servants who wished to claw-back on the Good Friday Agreement were firmly put in their place politically. As the Secretary of State knew, I would be reviewing all aspects of our consultation with one of her top officials (Bill Jeffrey, successor to Quentin Thomas) in London on Tuesday.

4. The Secretary of State accepted the thrust of what I was saying and agreed that we must "make sure our lines were completely clear". She added that they would not be making any more announcements on Commissions, etc., before the elections. This would allow for maximum consultation with us. She would also be consulting with the Northern parties this week. Her intention was to find a window (perhaps on a Sunday) between the 26th and the marching season to make a range of announcements (e.g. the Criminal Justice Commission, the Prisoners Review Group, and the proposed published Strategy on normalisation of security).

5. The Secretary of State finally said that she would be in Washington and New York from Tuesday to Thursday of next week. Her message there would be that progress on implementation was being made and, on the economic front, that the North would warmly welcome more investment from the US.


Dermot Gallagher
Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division

8 June 1998