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ASST/ SEC 86/2
11 FEB 1998
C.C.R.U.

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Date: 6 February, 1998

Julie
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L. Carstairs 11/2
H. note 8.
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Mr. McTurner 11/2
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- cc PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
- PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- PS/Mr Semple
- Mr Steele
- Mr Thomas (B&L)
- Mr Ray
- Mr Bell
- Mr Leach
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Beeton
- Mr Brooker
- Mrs Collins
- Mr Ferguson
- Mr Hill (B&L)
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Perry
- Mr Priestly
- Mr Warner
- Mr Whysall (B&L)

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B)

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH SINN FEIN - 3 FEBRUARY 1998

The Secretary of State had an hour long meeting with Sinn Fein in the wings of the Strand One discussions at Castle Buildings on Tuesday 3 February to discuss non-Talks matters. The meeting was good humoured and relaxed and covered a number of familiar issues. Sinn Fein were represented by Martin McGuinness and Aiden McAteer. The Secretary of State was accompanied by Mr Warner.

Re-entry of the UDP

Martin McGuinness asked the Secretary of State if she had had any news about the murders of Liam Conway (23.1.98) and John McColgan

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(24.1.98) - neither of the murders have been claimed. There was a belief in his community that the murders were committed by UFF. There was a perception that the two Governments and the RUC had colluded to hide information that indicated that the UFF had been involved in the murders in order to keep the UDP in the Talks. Whilst Sinn Fein were opposed to the Mitchell principles as preconditions to participation in the Talks they were keen to see 'equality of treatment' with regards the assessment of UDP re-entry; they did not want to see the UDP at the Talks in Dublin, this would be too soon.

The Secretary of State indicated the difficulties she faced in apportioning blame for an incident in the absence of a direct claim from a group. There was no categorical information to link the UFF to the murders of Liam Conway and John McColgan. If there was she would go public. There had never been any collusion between the Governments and the RUC to hide information in an attempt to keep a party in the Talks. She was aware of the message that would be sent out if the UDP were admitted whilst there was ambiguity over whether the UFF were active or not. If the Secretary of State received information that the UFF were active again, then she would not allow the UDP to return. She has said that she would reassess the situation in 2-3 weeks; their re-entry would depend upon 'words and deeds on the ground'.

Death threats and threat assessments

Mr McGuinness asked what assessment the Government had of the current state of play between the UDP and LVF. His community believed that any comment or actions by the LVF were inspired by the UDA. Mr Warner commented that there was a similar perception in the Protestant community with regard the link between Sinn Fein and INLA.

Mr McGuinness asked if there was any evidence that the Catholic Reactionary Force (CRF) existed; he personally doubted that it did; any

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crank can make a phone call or leave a note making a threat; threats were destabilising. The profile these threats had assumed in the media was disproportionate to the reality. All threats should not be treated in the same way: they must be assessed and dealt with accordingly. A threat from INLA should be treated more seriously than a threat from the CRF; that so many threats from the nationalists side appeared to be taken seriously by the authorities had led to an atmosphere of fear of reprisal in the Catholic community. He was also concerned that the UFF statement (23 January) had ended with a threat. He believed that loyalist groups were responsible for the recent threats as part of their preparation for further attacks.

The Secretary of State replied that the Chief Constable had a duty to protect those who were the subject of threats, but noted that threats from different organisations should carry varying weight and agreed that it would be useful to reflect this in announcements made by the Chief Constable to the media.

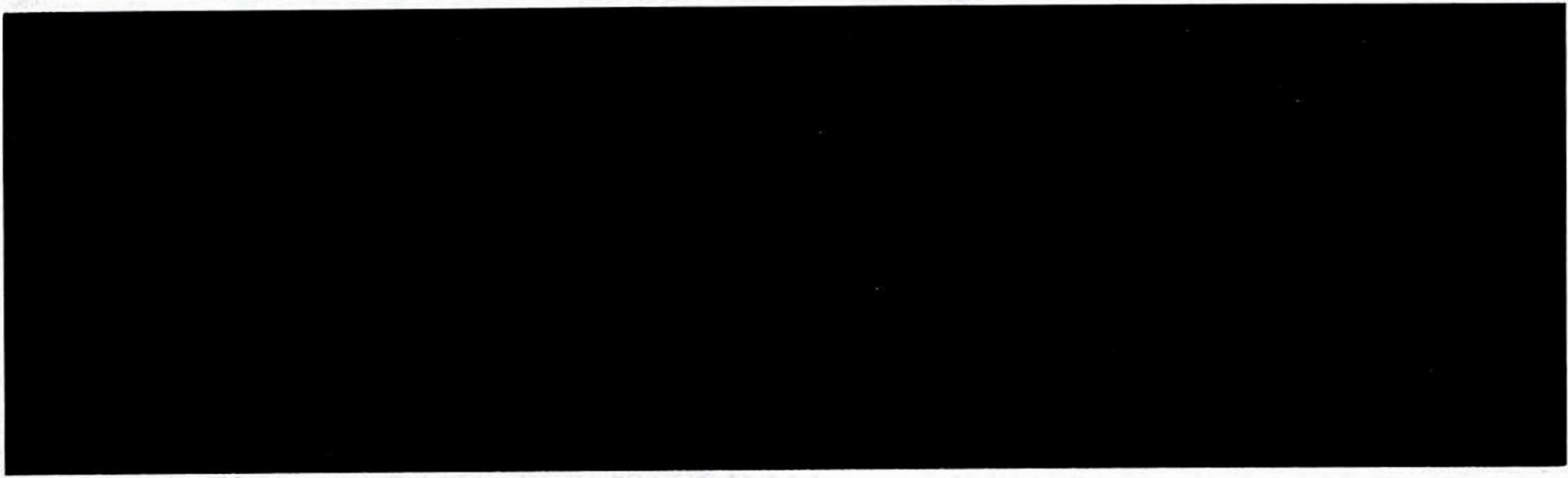
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SACHR report

The Secretary of State said that she was due to discuss the Government's response during the week and would notify Mr McGuinness when the response was due to be issued.

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Roisin McAliskey

The Secretary of State undertook to find out the latest position from the Home Secretary.

Balcombe Street Four

Mr McGuinness asked when they were due to be moved to Dublin. The Secretary of State commented that she would speak to the Home Secretary, adding that he was looking for the tariffs to be honoured.

The meeting continued briefly in my absence during which time I understand the Secretary of State merely covered some of the issues raised above again.

(Signed)

Robert Travis

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