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BRITISH EMBASSY.

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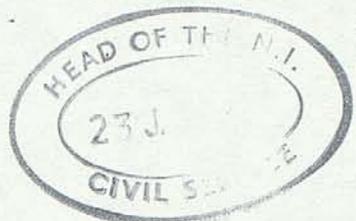
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10 January 1986

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

Sir Alan Goodison KCMG CVO
DUBLIN

PUS/520
21 JAN 1986
N.I.O. LONDON



Dear Alan,

1. Your new American colleague, Margaret Heckler, came to lunch with me today. She gets to you at the end of January. I think you know her background. Irish-American from Massachusetts, maiden name O'Shaugnessy, daughter of a first generation immigrant from Ireland, Congresswoman for Massachusetts for many years in the Republican interest and, until recently, Secretary for Health and Human Services. She underwent a well publicised divorce in 1985. Ambivalent about Ireland and her appointment as American Ambassador. Very conscious of her Irish ancestry, with the Easter rebellion in her bloodstream, but she deeply offended her Irish immigrant parents when she told them that she thought "Ireland was a great place to be from". A politician to her fingertips, and therefore not relishing the diplomatic role.
2. On the up-side, she is a devoted supporter of the President and determined to carry out his policies. A fan of the Prime Minister's, whose leadership qualities she greatly admires. Also an admirer of Garrett Fitzgerald and a convinced believer both in the Hillsborough Agreement and also in the courage of both Margaret Thatcher and Garrett Fitzgerald in addressing the problem in the way they have. She seemed convinced that it holds out the best hope of a way forward out of the general morass of the Irish problem, though conscious of the difficulties that lie strewn in its path.
3. Possibly on the down-side an activist. She has a great deal to learn, but she will want to make her mark. I suggested to her and she agreed that one of the most helpful contributions that she might be able to make is in educating the Irish American constituency here about the realities of modern Ireland. She said she was conscious of a generation gap in Ireland with the older generation favouring the American connection, and with the younger generation, so she said, developing a certain anti-Americanism. She is very keen on accentuating the economic and minimising the religious, declaring herself to be a convinced ecumenical. She is in favour of American financial support for the Hillsborough Agreement, but fears that, following the Gramm-Rudman amendment, designed to reduce the American budget deficit,

- 1. cc PS/SofS (L+B)
- PS/Mr Scott (L+B)
- PS/PUS (B)
- PS/Mr Bloomfield *22/*
- Mr Brennan
- Mr Chesterton
- Mr M. Elliott
- Mr Bell

/funds

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2. PUS to see



funds may not be as freely available as was originally hoped.

4. We discussed the forthcoming by-elections. She was anxious for re-assurance that the Unionists would not have a veto on Hillsborough. I said that the decision to have the by-elections was perhaps a salutary reminder of the strength of Protestant feeling and the ever-present dangers of a Protestant backlash. Nonetheless, the Protestants seemed to be prepared to go, this time, the constitutional way and they would certainly not have a veto. The Hillsborough Agreement had been ratified by constitutional majorities in both Houses of Parliament and the Prime Minister herself should be assumed to be totally committed to the success of Hillsborough. Moreover, the Prime Minister and Taoiseach had a good personal relationship.

5. She was also convinced of the closeness of the relationship between the President and the Prime Minister and of the importance of Britain as an ally in NATO and as a trading partner within the free world's open trading system. She recognised that Britain was overwhelmingly more important to America than was the Republic, but pointed out, correctly, that, politically, the Irish American constituency of 44 million Irish Americans was an ever-present factor. She hoped, rather naively I thought, that at the end of the road a resolution of the Northern Ireland problem might bring the Republic into the Alliance.

6. I recommended very strongly that she should get in touch with you when she got to Dublin. You will of course form your own judgement about her after you have met her and observed her in operation. I did not at this stage suggest that she visit Northern Ireland or, indeed, London. But depending on how she performs, I think that in due course it will be very desirable for her to get acquainted with the Northern Ireland scene and with British Ministers, either in Belfast or in London, or both.

7. In short, she may be a bit of a loose cannon, with considerable potential for benefit to our interests if handled properly; but also with some potential for danger if she lets her heart get ahead of her head and her tongue get ahead of her judgement. Altogether, an interesting appointment, and one very different from more recent incumbents.

Oliver Wright
Oliver Wright

cc : A D S Goodall Esq CMG, FCO
Sir Robert Andrew, NIO