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FROM: P N BELL  
BRITISH SECRETARY  
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*Jacqueline R14/98*

*Mr McCann*  
*Murphy*

cc: See Distribution List

*LD 22/5*

MR STEPHENS

### CONVERSATIONS WITH THE IRISH - THE PRIME MINISTER

Following today's Board meeting, I was able to give some reassurance, without undermining our own position, as to the implications of the Prime Minister's last speech here - and on the lines you had suggested, which simply underlined and overruled what my colleagues had already been told. Thus, I reminded David Donoghue that:

- HMG would remain faithful to the Agreement (no cherry pickers here) - and his speech clarified, but did not seek to alter it. (Whatever spin David Trimble sought to put on it, that was his own business.);
- the speech called for an overall judgment of what it would take to be satisfied about parties' bona fides;
- the four factors to which David Donoghue had drawn my attention were all relevant to such a judgment but they were not separate hurdles each to be crossed, still less additional pre-conditions;
- the Prime Minister was keenly aware of the necessity of not becoming trapped in a web of new tests. But he was, and I made the point with all the gravitas at my disposal, he was serious about the underlying issue and the necessity for all concerned to put violence and the tools of violence irrevocably behind them; and,

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- as to the technical point of how we were going to convert these commitments into legislation, we were - as we had told David Donoghue only yesterday - still thinking about how actually to do it.

2. David Donoghue seemed to find all this helpful, and will be reporting accordingly back to Dublin.

3. He will also be reporting back to Dublin on areas in our Settlement Bill where we are inclined to believe that legislative provision will be needed in respect of a North/South Ministerial Council. We had gone through this in outline yesterday, but - drawing this time on helpful material from IPL - I was able to provide much useful information which those planning the Dublin legislation should find valuable.

4. Given what the Polls etc were then telling us, I also took the opportunity of once again emphasising the importance of the Irish side's doing everything that they could to encourage their own clients to say the kind of things that might rally hesitant Unionists. This may be something of a ritual gesture, akin to the turning of a Tibetan prayer wheel, but one hopes the message is getting through - and is being vigorously pressed on all channels available to us.

5. Finally, and more a matter for our security colleagues, the Chairman of the ICPC had been lamenting to the Irish the slowness of responses to his letters from the NIO. He had not, he apparently claimed, had yet had a reply to a letter he had sent to Mr Ingram over 5 weeks ago. Mrs Collins may wish to investigate.

*Signed:*

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