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BÉAL FEIRSTE

BELFAST

*Mr. G. McCarthy
Mr. J. J. O'Brien
31/5*

CONFIDENTIAL

29 April, 1991.

Mr. Dermot Gallagher,
Assistant Secretary,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs.

*1. cc PCC
Mr. M. J. O'Brien; PCC
Mr. P. J. O'Brien & Mr. M. J. O'Brien
Cable M1
PCC
2. Mr. M. J. O'Brien*

Dear Assistant Secretary,

Alleged Disclosures from a Garda Document: Sproule Case

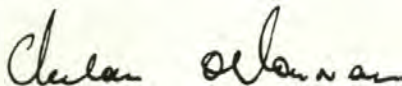
I mentioned to you that we had queries from the other side in the wake of the recent Confidence Meeting at Stormont on 17 April. It was clear to them that we had taken offence at the remarks of John Ledlie about the Sproule Case and they asked for further explanations. We gave the following response:

- Leaving aside Ledlie's provocative tone which is characteristic, there was an assumption in his remarks that there had been collusion between the Garda Authorities and the IRA; we pointed out that the matter was being investigated on both sides of the border; the disclosures from the document did not in itself indicate collusion.
- Ledlie sought to equate the present incident with the numerous Northern disclosures in the late summer of 1989 which led to the Stevens Inquiry; we rejected the comparison, observing that whereas there was a long history of collusion between the security forces and paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, there was no such history in the South; we thought it was ill-judged to suggest that our Government had "hyped" the issues in 1989 or to propose that the "boot was on the other foot" now.
- The rhetoric of Ian Paisley had been treated as credible and comparable to our own views as a Government; we had been treated as extremist and we had been asked in the most patronising way to join the British Government in the "middle ground".

- It had been put to us quite explicitly that we condemned the killings of civilian Catholics but not those of policemen and soldiers, when an examination of the record would show that this was not so; we consistently condemned all paramilitary violence, but not necessarily every incident of it, whether the victim was Catholic or Protestant, because the condemnation by rote of every killing could have the effect of diminishing the force of the Government's disapprobation.

As you know, Ledlie has been apologetic but we have been told privately here that he gave a "revisionist" view of the exchanges to a meeting with Ministers, i.e., he seems to have suggested that he gave us a well-merited lecture. The reactions we have had from officials indicate a feeling that Ledlie went over the top and was needlessly offensive; but there remains a firm view that we are not sufficiently sensitive to Unionist opinion in our public statements, that we put the boot in to their side without always showing appreciation of their problems and that the disclosures in the Sproule case may cause us to be more understanding in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Declan O'Donovan
Joint Secretary