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From: PS/Secretary of State
25 August 2000

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Mr Jeffrey - O

MEETING WITH MARTIN McGUINNESS, 25 AUGUST

The Secretary of State this morning met Martin McGuinness, who was accompanied by Aidan McAteer, at Hillsborough. You and I were also present.

2. The meeting, which lasted 90 minutes, covered OTRs.
OTRs

11. **McGuinness** then turned to OTRs. Here again, the Prime Minister's commitments had not been honoured. Once more the Secretary of State seemed not to hear what he was being told. **McAteer** (in a conciliatory intervention) stressed the positive impact that the return of fugitives would have in republican communities; this, for them, was not merely an outstanding issue but a powerful one.

12. **The Secretary of State** said that he understood what McAteer was saying and shared the same objective. It was no part of HMG's policy to have people permanently unable to return home. But as the Prime Minister had explained the legal position was highly complex. In an ideal world these issues would have been worked through before any timescale, however qualified, had been implied. In the case of convicted individuals, we were looking at the possibility of administrative...
arrangements which would avoid the requirement for legislation (which would take time and risked being lost in the event of an early General Election). In the case of those not convicted, there seemed little alternative to the case-by-case review now underway, other than a highly controversial legislative amnesty. Decisions in this area did not rest with him, and pressure had to some extent been counter-productive by raising issues of principle. Officials would meet Sinn Fein within the next week to discuss options. (McAteer undertook to identify a suitable representative.)

Nick Perry

N P PERRY
PS/Secretary of State
\( (B) 28110 \)
\( (L) 6462 \)

cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - O
PS/Mr Howarth (B&L) - O
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Mr Fittall - O
Ms O’Mara - O
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Mr Sawers, No 10