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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 630 OF 14 MARCH

INFO DUBLIN, NIO BELFAST, NIO LONDON, CG NEW YORK, BIS NEW YORK.

NORTHERN IRELAND: ST PATRICK'S DAY

1. THE DECISION OF IRISH AMERICAN ORGANISATIONS TO ELECT NORAID LEADER MICHAEL FLANNERY AS GRAND MARSHAL OF THIS YEAR'S NEW YORK PARADE, HAS GIVEN ST PATRICK'S DAY MORE THAN USUAL PUBLIC PROMINENCE. IN A MAJOR SETBACK FOR THE ORGANISERS OF THE PARADE, THE DECISION BY SENATOR MOYNIHAN AND FORMER GOVERNOR CAREY (BOTH MEMBERS OF THE FOUR HORSEMEN GROUP) NOT TO TAKE PART IN THIS YEAR'S PARADE HAS NOW BEEN ENDORSED BY SENATOR KENNEDY AND SPEAKER O'NEILL. THE IRISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON AND THE IRISH CONSULATE GENERAL IN NEW YORK HAD EARLIER DISASSOCIATED THEMSELVES FROM THE PARADE. MAYOR KOCH, NEW YORK'S NEW GOVERNOR CUOMO AND THE STATE'S OTHER SENATOR (D'AMATO) STILL INTEND TO TAKE PART (THE LAST TWO ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR EXTREME VIEWS ON NORTHERN IRELAND). CARDINAL COOKE'S POSITION REMAINS EQUIVOCAL (NEW YORK TELNO 20) THOUGH TODAY'S PRESS REPORTY THAT HE HAS AGREED TO A DECISION BY THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK TO FORBID FOUR CATHOLIC SCHOOL BANDS FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE PARADE. THE CARDINAL'S EQUIVOCATION PROMPTED COMMENT AT THE WEEKEND IN AN ARTICLE BY THE WASHINGTON POST COLUMNIST MARY MCGRORY WHO ASKED WHETHER THE CARDINAL, AS HONORARY GRAND MARSHAL OF THE PARADE WOULD GREET FLANNERY ON THE STEPS OF ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL AND QUOTE GIVE NORAID WHAT IT WANTS MOST, A PICTURE OF A PRINCE OF THE CHURCH ENDORSING AN ADVOCATE OF TERRORISM? UNQUOTE.

2. PRESS COMMENT ON THE DECISION TO ELECT FLANNERY HAS BEEN ALMOST UNIVERSALLY CRITICAL. TODAY'S WASHINGTON POST CONTAINS ONE OF THE PAPER'S STRONGEST EVER CRITICISMS OF THE IRA QUOTE THE IRA IS A MOTLEY COLLECTION OF THOROUGHLY RADICAL GROUPS EXPLOITING LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES IN NORTHERN IRELAND SO AS TO GAIN POWER AND TO BRING AS MUCH RUIN TO IRELAND AS ANY ENGLISHMAN EVER ENVISAGED.... IT IS TRYING TO STICK IRELAND WITH MARXISM, A THOROUGHLY FOREIGN IDEOLOGY WHICH WOULD DESTROY THE IRISH WAY OF LIFE, ITS CHURCH, THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND IN THE SOUTH, AND THOSE FEW BIDS OF PROSPERITY THAT HAVE COME WITH FREEDOM.... IT MURDERS INNOCENT IRISHMEN, PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLIC ALIKE, AND KILLS BRITISH SOLDIERS WHO PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME ARE ATTEMPTING TO HAVE A BENIGN INFLUENCE IN IRELAND. THE TERRORISTS FOR THEIR PART BOAST OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PLO. THEY HAVE NO AFFECTION FOR AMERICA: IDEOLOGICALLY THEY VIEW US WITH REPUGNANCE. UNQUOTE

3. THE EFFECT OF ALL THIS PUBLICITY HAS BEEN TO FOCUS ATTENTION, MORE CLEARLY THAN EVER BEFORE, ON NORAID'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROVISIONAL IRA. IT HAS ALSO LED THE FOUR HORSEMEN TO TAKE A FIRM STAND AGAINST NORAID IN PARTICULAR RATHER THAN, AS IN THE PAST,

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AGAINST QUOTE THE MEN OF VIOLENCE UNQUOTE IN GENERAL. HOWEVER, THE FOUR HORSEMEN HAVE TAKEN A GOOD DEAL OF CRITICISM FOR THIS STAND FROM GROUPS LIKE THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THE HIBERNIANS WHO ELECTED FLANNERY AND ARE, WE GATHER, HOPING TO RE-ESTABLISH THEIR NORTHERN IRELAND CREDENTIALS BY INCLUDING SOME CRITICISM OF BRITAIN IN THEIR ANNUAL ST PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT. IN PARTICULAR, WE HAVE LEARNED FROM CONGRESSMAN FOLEY'S OFFICE THAT THEY PLAN TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC CRITICISM OF THE USE OF PLASTIC BULLETS. WE HAVE TOLD FOLEY'S OFFICE THAT FOR BRITAIN TO BE SINGLED OUT IN THIS WAY IN A STATEMENT THAT INCLUDED NO SPECIFIC ALLUSION TO THE PROVISIONAL IRA WOULD BE WHOLLY INDEFENSIBLE GIVEN OUR OWN RECORD ON PLASTIC BULLETS (ONLY FOUR FIRED THIS YEAR) AND THE HORRENDOUS RECORD OF THE PROVISIONALS. WE HAVE SAID THAT THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND WHO HAVE SUFFERED THE BALLYKELLY BOMBING AND OTHER OUTRAGES, AND PEOPLE IN BRITAIN WITH FRESH MEMORIES OF THE LONDON BOMBINGS, WOULD CONCLUDE THAT THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND HAD DECIDED TO PLACE POLITICS OVER PRINCIPLE. FOLEY'S OFFICE, BY WHOM THIS POINT IS WELL TAKEN, HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO TRY TO AMEND THE DRAFT.

4. THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND ARE ALSO COOKING UP A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO BE INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE ON ST PATRICK'S DAY WHICH WOULD CONDEMN VIOLENCE BUT WHICH WOULD GO ON TO QUOTE URGE THE PARTIES CONCERNED TO SEEK AN EARLY POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF THE CONFLICT IN NORTHERN IRELAND, WITH THE CONSENT OF ALL INVOLVED, THAT PROMOTES RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO TRADITIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND BETWEEN BRITAIN AND IRELAND, THAT SECURES FULL RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE TWO SIDES OF THE COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND ENDS THE DIVISION OF THE IRISH PEOPLE AND ACHIEVES THE GOAL OF IRISH UNITY UNQUOTE. CONGRESSMAN FOLEY'S OFFICE CONSULTED US ABOUT THIS DRAFT, WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN CONSIDERABLY WATERED DOWN FROM THE ORIGINAL. WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT PREJUDGES IN AN UNACCEPTABLE WAY ISSUES WHICH ARE FOR THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND FOR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT TO DECIDE. IN SUBSTANCE, HOWEVER, IT GOES NO FURTHER THAN PREVIOUS POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND. THE RESOLUTION, WHICH WOULD CALL ON THE PRESIDENT TO DRAW ITS TERMS TO THE ATTENTION OF HMG, WOULD BE NON-BINDING. FOLEY BELIEVES THERE IS A FAIR CHANCE THAT, ONCE INTRODUCED, NO FURTHER ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IE. THAT IT WILL NOT ACTUALLY BE BROUGHT TO VOTE.

5. THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER TO MAKE A STATEMENT ON ST PATRICK'S DAY. STATE DEPARTMENT AND WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS HAD HOPED TO STAND PAT ON LAST YEAR'S STATEMENT WHICH WAS ENTIRELY SATISFACTORY FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS INCREASINGLY LIKELY THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING AND A DRAFT, ON SIMILAR LINES TO LAST YEAR'S, HAS BEEN PREPARED. IT MAY BE POSITIVELY HELPFUL IF THE PRESIDENT DOES ISSUE A STATEMENT. HE IS TO LUNCH WITH SPEAKER O'NEILL AND OTHER IRISH AMERICAN LEADERS, IN COMPANY WITH THE IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER, ON CAPITAL HILL ON ST PATRICK'S DAY AND WILL LATER ATTEND A RECEPTION AT THE IRISH EMBASSY.

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6. WE ARE TAKING SEPARATE ACTION ON THE QUESTION OF A FORUM FOR A NEW IRELAND (YOUR TELNO 426). INITIAL REACTION IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT SUGGESTS THAT THEY ARE WELL AWARE OF THE DANGERS OF APPEARING TO ENDORSE THE IRISH GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVE AND THAT THEY REALISE THAT, ONCE AGAIN, AN IRISH GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ST PATRICK'S DAY TO DRAW THE US GOVERNMENT INTO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ISSUE.

7. IN SHORT, THE IRISH ACTIVISTS HERE HAVE DONE THEMSELVES NOTHING BUT HARM BY THE SELECTION OF FLANNERY TO LEAD THE ST PATRICK'S DAY PARADE. THE SITUATION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN COMPLICATED BY THE IRISH GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL, WHICH WILL APPEAL TO A CERTAIN SECTION OF OPINION HERE.

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