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GRS 540

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FM DUBLIN 171713Z SEPT 79

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 293 OF 17 SEPTEMBER

PS TO PM

Prime Minister

Not very encouraging

no *think*

FOLLOW UP TO ANGLO-IRISH DOWNING STREET SUMMIT

1. HEAD OF CHANCERY CALLED TODAY ON SWIFT (COUNSELLOR, ANGLO-IRISH SECTION) TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED MEETING OF OFFICIALS. SWIFT BEGAN BY EXPLAINING THAT IN THE IRISH VIEW THERE WERE NO EASY OR OBVIOUS IMPROVEMENTS WHICH COULD BE MADE TO EXISTING SECURITY CO-OPERATION; ALL THE EASY THINGS HAD BEEN DONE ALREADY. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WERE HOWEVER COMMITTED TO PROGRESS BY THE TERMS OF THE DOWNING STREET COMMUNIQUE AND THIS MEANT THAT THEY WERE COMMITTED TO CHANGES IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM. BECAUSE THESE CHANGES WERE DIFFICULT TO PROCESS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY THE IRISH WERE NOT YET AT A STAGE WHERE A MEETING OF OFFICIALS WOULD BE USEFUL. IRISH MINISTERS WOULD BE DISCUSSING QUESTIONS OF SUBSTANCE AND PROCEDURE AT A MEETING ON THE AFTERNOON OF TUESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER. OFFICIALS WOULD THEN KNOW WHERE THEY STOOD.

2. FOR THE IRISH IT WOULD BE MUCH EASIER IF THE MEETING OF OFFICIALS WAS TO BE IN DUBLIN BUT THEY DID NOT HAVE ANY FIRM VIEWS AS TO WHETHER IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO HAVE A FORMAL SESSION IN THE AFTERNOON, FOLLOWED BY AN INFORMAL DINNER, AND A FURTHER FORMAL SESSION THE NEXT DAY. BECAUSE OF TOMORROW'S MINISTERIAL MEETING THE EARLIEST TIME AT WHICH THE IRISH COULD POSSIBLY BE READY TO SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE AT AN OFFICIALS MEETING WOULD BE THE AFTERNOON OF WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER. HOWEVER, THE EARLIEST PRACTICAL DAY FOR TALKS WOULD BE THURSDAY OR EVEN FRIDAY. SWIFT ENQUIRED WHETHER WE ENVISAGED THIS AS THE FIRST OF SEVERAL OFFICIAL MEETINGS, OR AS THE ONLY PREPARATORY MEETING BEFORE THE MINISTERIAL MEETING. IF IT WAS THE ONLY MEETING THEN MAYBE THERE WAS NO REAL URGENCY. SMITH REPLIED THAT THE QUESTION COULD ONLY BE ANSWERED WHEN THE OFFICIAL MEETING WAS FINISHED. IF MORE STILL NEEDED TO BE DONE TO PREPARE THE MINISTERS MEETING PROPERLY THEN ANOTHER MEETING OF OFFICIALS WOULD BE NEEDED. SWIFT SAID THAT THE IRISH ASSUMED THAT THE MEETING WAS DESIGNED TO PREPARE THE MEETING OF MINISTERS IN THE CLASSIC WAY AND THAT IT WOULD DISCUSS PROCEDURE AND TACTICS AS WELL AS SUBSTANCE.

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3. SWIFT WAS NOT VERY FORTHCOMING OVER THE PROPOSED MEETING BETWEEN THE GARDA COMMISSIONER AND THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF THE RUC. HE SAID THAT AS THE CHIEF CONSTABLE WAS ALREADY AWARE, THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR THE GARDA COMMISSIONER, BOTH BECAUSE OF THE POPE'S FORTHCOMING VISIT AND BECAUSE OF THE DEMANDS OF THE IRISH PRESIDENCY. THE GARDA COMMISSIONER HAD NO SPARE TIME AT ALL AND ACCORDINGLY WAS EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO ENGAGE IN ANY MEETING UNLESS IT WAS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. IN ANY CASE THE IRISH WERE NOT CLEAR WHAT NEEDED TO BE DISCUSSED BETWEEN POLICE CHIEFS IN ADVANCE OF ANY POLITICAL DECISIONS, PARTICULARLY AS A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE TWO POLICE FORCES EXISTED ALREADY. SOME OF THE SUGGESTIONS WE HAVE MADE WERE OLD SUGGESTIONS WHICH HAD BEEN DISCUSSED MANY TIMES BETWEEN THE TWO CHIEFS OF POLICE AND INDEED BETWEEN THEIR PREDECESSORS. IN THE VIEW OF THE GARDA COMMISSIONER, OUR NEW SUGGESTIONS (1 TO 4 IN THE AIDE MEMOIRE) WERE CONCERNED WITH QUESTIONS OF INTERNAL GARDA ADMINISTRATION NOT QUESTIONS OF SECURITY CO-OPERATION AT ALL. THE GARDA COMMISSIONER COULD NOT NEGOTIATE THESE QUESTIONS, THOUGH HE WOULD NATURALLY BE INTERESTED IN THE VIEWS OF HIS COUNTERPART.

4. SWIFT PROMISED TO INFORM US AS SOON AS ANY DECISIONS WERE TAKEN ON THE IRISH SIDE.

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