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Mr. McElgown

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SERIAL NO 76

IMMEDIATE

TO HQ FROM LONDON
FOR AST/SEC DONLON FROM AMBASSADOR

9/21/76
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AIREY NEAVE CAME TO LUNCH TODAY.

HE TALKED FIRST ABOUT THE SECURITY SITUATION. THE MAIN POINT HE MADE WAS THAT THE ARMY MUST BE LESS RESTRICTED IN WHAT IT CAN DO. IT MUST BE FREE TO SHOOT AND KILL IRA TERRORISTS WITH A VIEW TO CLEARING UP THE SOUTH ARMAGH AREA. THE ADVENT OF THE SAS THERE HAS HAD A NOTABLE EFFECT. BUT IT IS TO BE EXPECTED THAT THE AREA OF IRA OPERATIONS WILL MOVE WEST FROM SOUTH ARMAGH AND THE ARMY MUST INTENSIFY ITS VIGILANCE IN TYRONE AND FERMANAGH. WHILE AIREY AGREES WITH GIVING THE ARMY MORE LATITUDE, THEY MUST NEVERTHELESS BE UNDER A DEGREE OF POLITICAL CONTROL. IN FACT HE HAD NOTHING NEW TO SAY ON THE SECURITY QUESTION EXCEPT A LOT OF WORDS.

AIREY THEN TALKED AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH ABOUT THE THREAT TO THESE ISLANDS FROM THE U.S.S.R. WHAT THE USSR IS DOING OFF THE COAST OF FINLAND IS, HE SAID, WELL KNOWN. HE WENT ON TO TALK OF THE USSR INFLUENCE IN THE ICELANDIC DISPUTE. THIS COULD BE PART OF A PROGRESSION TO ACQUIRE GREATER INFLUENCE IN BRITISH AND IRISH PORTS. BRITAIN AND IRELAND ARE THEREFORE UP AGAINST THE PROBLEM OF THE SECURITY OF TWO ISLANDS AND THE QUESTION OF A COMMUNIST INFILTRATION OF BOTH OF THEM. THIS IS A MATTER WHICH HE THOUGHT MRS THATCHER WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH THE TAOISEACH WHEN THEY MEET. HE SAID THAT IAN GILMOUR MAY WANT TO HAVE A TALK WITH ME BEFORE THIS MEETING. FROM ALL OF THIS I WOULD HAVE TENDED TO CONCLUDE THAT AIREY WAS TALKING THROUGH THE TOP OF HIS HEAD BUT WHAT HE SAID WAS IDENTICAL WITH WHAT THE SWEDISH AMBASSADOR SAID TO ME AT THE WEEK-END.

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ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION HE HAD LITTLE OF SPECIFIC INTEREST TO SAY. IN AN EFFORT TO DRAW HIM, I MENTIONED THE NEED TO AVOID THE CREATION OF A POLITICAL VACUUM. HE AGREED READILY ON THE NEED TO RETAIN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN A CONSULTATIVE CAPACITY.

A CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE NORTH IS AN URGENT NECESSITY. IT WOULD BE WRONG TO GIVE DIRECTION IN THE AREA TO A RESIDENT JUNIOR MINISTER. MERLYN SHOULD GO BUT AIREY WAS NOT PREPARED TO OFFER A VIEW AS TO A SUITABLE SUCCESSOR. I KNOW FROM PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS THAT HE WOULD NOT WELCOME THE APPOINTMENT OF ROY HATTERSLEY. THE IMMEDIATE NEED, IN THE VIEW OF THE TORIES, IS THAT FRANK COOPER SHOULD BE REMOVED. HE IS DETERMINING POLICY AND HE IS MUCH TOO NARROW AND TOO DICTATORIAL IN HIS APPROACH.

WE TALKED ABOUT THE WEEK-END ASSERTIONS BY PAISLEY THAT A CONCERTED EFFORT IS BEING MADE TO UNDERMINE HIS INFLUENCE. AIREY AGREED THAT THERE IS SUCH AN EFFORT WHICH HE FULLY SUPPORTS. PAISLEY IS HOWEVER IN POSSESSION OF THE FACTS. SOME SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE R.U.C. ATTEND PAISLEY'S CHURCH AND ARE BELIEVED TO PASS INFORMATION ON TO HIM.

THERE HAS TO BE A CONTINUATION OF DIRECT RULE BUT SOME MODIFICATIONS IN THE EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS HAVE TO BE MADE. ON THESE HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN.

ABOUT A VISIT TO DUBLIN BY MRS THATCHER, AIREY DID NOT AS I SUSPECTED BRING ME SUGGESTED DATES. SHE IS VERY TIED UP FOR FEBRUARY AND EARLY MARCH. I USED ALL THE PERSUASIVENESS I COULD TO GET HIM TO PREVAIL ON HER TO PAY A VISIT SOON. HE PROMISED TO SEE HER THIS AFTERNOON AND TO PHONE ME TOMORROW.

DO'S 9/2/76 5.21

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cc PSM
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Mr. Nally (D/Tairincaoh)
Anglo-Irish Sections