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*cc'd Attorney General ✓  
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19 June 1989

Mr. Declan O'Donovan  
Counsellor  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs

*This was an "off-the-record"  
conversation and should not be  
referred to, therefore, in any  
contact with the relevant authorities*

Dear Declan

"This Week" programme on Fr. Patrick Ryan (15 June)

*cl  
2/6*

I have requested a transcript of this programme. I have also forwarded a video recording in today's bag.

*Video  
is  
available.*

You will already be familiar with the content of the programme. The central allegation made against Ryan is that he commissioned the purchase of electronic components which can be linked directly to a cache of bomb-making equipment discovered in Nottinghamshire in January 1984 and indirectly to the Hyde Park bomb attack in July 1982. Interviewed by the programme, Ryan acknowledged the purchase of the components concerned (FX 401 and FX 401L tonal decoders) and also of other items including about 900 Memo Park timing devices. He described his role as that of answering requests for the purchase of these items without, however, having any knowledge as to their ultimate destination.

You may be interested to have the following supplementary notes, arising from conversations I have had with the programme's researcher, which explain the background to the programme and expand on some of the points it made.

Last December the This Week team decided to prepare a feature on the Ryan affair. They did some work on it in the early weeks of this year but (along with BBC's "Panorama", who had a similar project) decided eventually to shelve it, as they were given to understand that its transmission might prejudice the case for action against Ryan under the CLJA which the British authorities wished to submit. When Ryan presented himself as a candidate in the EP elections, they felt that the time was right to dust off the project once more. They decided to investigate the case made against Ryan and to submit any material they came up with to Thames TV's and the IBA's lawyers for legal clearance.

According to the researcher, they got no assistance whatsoever from the British authorities. Their reputation as the makers of "Death on the Rock" had preceded them and Government Departments and Scotland Yard refused all cooperation. (The NIO's Press officer here, Alan Perceval, has separately told me that both the MOD and the RUC were asked to provide someone for the programme to explain the technical features of timing devices; they declined to do so, however, referring to the Irish DPP's continuing consideration of the case). For the latter reason, This Week considered that it would be pointless to approach the Irish authorities in connection with the programme.

Instead, they contacted the Belgian police who, after some initial hesitation, eventually gave them access to their file on the case. This formed the basis for their subsequent researches which took them to Switzerland, France and Spain. They focussed on the discovery, at the Brussels house where Ryan was arrested last year, of a receipt relating to the purchase on Ryan's behalf of a quantity of FX 401 and FX 401L 'tonal decoders', whose purpose is to locate the precise frequency needed for the detonation of radio-controlled bombs. They tracked down the individual named on the receipt and interviewed him. Described fictitiously on the programme as 'Mr. Bingham', his name is in fact Frank Crosby. He is a British national whom Ryan met while on a visit to Libya in 1980. At Ryan's request, the programme-makers claim to have established, Crosby purchased fifty FX 401 and fifty FX 401L devices in January 1982 from a company called Consumer Microcircuits Ltd. in Essex and delivered them to Ryan in Paris. Crosby gave Ryan a receipt detailing the transaction (which had involved advancing funds to Crosby).

In January 1984, the batch number on the FX 401L devices (8131) turned up on a FX 401L device forming part of an IRA decoding unit found in a forest in Nottinghamshire. When Ryan's house in Brussels was searched following his arrest last year, a single FX 401L device bearing the batch number 8131 was found along with 23 FX 401 devices. Fragments of the circuitboard found after the Hyde Park bombing in July 1982 suggested strongly that a FX 401 device had been used in the manufacturing of this bomb (subsequently attributed to Gilbert McNamee).

Crosby told the This Week team that he is prepared to travel to Dublin to give evidence against Ryan if a prosecution is instituted. It is worth mentioning, however, that, although they used him on the programme, This Week's private assessment is that Crosby is in many respects an unreliable witness and would not stand up under cross-examination. They found him confused and self-contradictory on many points. Indeed, their general opinion of him was so low that they wondered why Ryan, who appeared a bright and shrewd individual, had anything to do with him. (The researcher at one point even wondered whether Crosby might not have been an elaborate plant by the British security services for the purpose of trapping Ryan).

*cc'd* || The This Week team concluded early on that Ryan's acquisition of some 900 Memo Park timing devices was less damaging to him than the FX 401 matter. Though they paid close attention to it on the programme, they do not attach the same significance to it as, say, Roger Cook did on last week's "Cook Report" (a transcript of which I have forwarded to you). It was, after all, not a crime to purchase Memo Park devices during the seventies. Although police sources believe that a link can be established between Ryan's Memo Parks and a number of bombing incidents (the Pringle, Debenhams and Havers attacks), the This Week team are sceptical about this as the devices were mass-produced by a number of companies. They tracked down a Swiss from whom, they believe, Ryan purchased one Memo Park device. He pointed to the impossibility of tracing a particular device back to an individual sale. He also made it clear that he would under no circumstances travel to Dublin to give evidence against Ryan.

In the course of the extradition hearing in Belgium, the items discovered in Ryan's Brussels accommodation were sent to the UK by the Belgian police in anticipation of a positive response to Britain's extradition request. Though they could not establish this conclusively, the programme-makers privately suspect that the items were not returned when the request was declined and are still in British hands. If it is true that the items have not been returned by the British police, the researcher commented, questions may arise about the legal entitlement of the British authorities to this material and, consequently, about the propriety of its use as part of a case submitted by the British Government against Ryan.

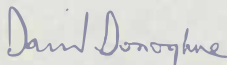
*This exchange was featured on ITN News on the night of the proposal*

An interview with Ryan lasting one and a half hours was arranged through Richard Beale, a Ryan associate, and carried out by John Taylor, the programme's presenter, in Ballyunion on 11 June. Ryan indicated that, because of the "Death on the Rock" programme, he had more confidence in the This Week team than he would have in most British media. In the interview, he accepted the points put to him about his purchase of the tonal decoders through Frank Crosby (though This Week did not confront him on the supposed link with the Nottinghamshire find and the Hyde Park bomb) and about the other equipment he acquired over the years. In what This Week considered his most damaging admission (because it contradicted his regular claim that he has confined himself to fund-raising), Ryan told them that he acquired the FX 401 microswitch devices to "fulfil a request". Claiming not to know what a microswitch is for, he said that "I buy them and pass them on" and that it was none of his business where they eventually ended up. He gave a similar response when questioned about the Memo Park devices and a Robbe receiver.

In addition to the interview with Lord Havers, the former Attorney General (carried on the programme), This Week conducted interviews with John Morris, Labour's shadow Attorney General, and with Deputy Sean Barrett (which were not used).

The programme was cleared in unamended form by lawyers for Thames TV and the IBA several hours before transmission last Thursday evening. From comments made by the researcher, it seems likely that Ryan's own admission of the points put to him by This Week, in an interview carried on the programme, satisfied the lawyers that they have sufficient protection in the event of a libel action. The researcher also indicated that the team's basic assumption was that, as any prosecution of Ryan would take place in another jurisdiction and would involve judges rather than a jury, they would be safe from charges of having prejudiced the outcome of the matter. Their own conclusion, in any event, is that a decision to prosecute Ryan is unlikely at this stage. They reflected this belief in the closing section of the programme, suggesting that "with the passage of time the chances of prosecution look slim."

Yours sincerely



David Donoghue  
Press and Information Officer

c.c. Mr. R. O'Brien, Press Counsellor