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INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BIS NEW YORK, UKDEL NATO

UKDEL NATO FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY

MY TELNO 434: NORTHERN IRELAND: PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE TAOISEACH

SUMMARY

- 1. TAOISEACH CONFIRMS KEY PHRASE OF IRISH JOINT DECLARATION. RISKS FOR US IN WHAT WOULD BE A MAJOR SHIFT OF POSITION.

DETAIL

JD says
"and
Concurrently"

- 2. THE TAOISEACH CONFIRMED IN AN RTE INTERVIEW YESTERDAY EVENING, 1 DECEMBER, THAT ONE ELEMENT BEING SOUGHT IN THE IRISH JOINT DECLARATION WAS 'THE RIGHT TO NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION BASED ON CONSENT FREELY GIVEN, NORTH AND SOUTH'. HE DENIED THAT THIS WOULD BE IN EXCHANGE FOR AMENDMENTS TO ARTICLES 2 AND 3. EARLIER, IN THE DAIL, HE REFUSED TO ACCEPT AN OPPOSITION SUGGESTION THAT THE SELF-DETERMINATION FORMULA WAS A 'SALE AND LEASEBACK ARRANGEMENT.'

- 3. TODAY'S PRESS (DOMINATED BY REPORTS OF THE MISTAKES IN THE HMG/PIRA DOCUMENTS) PRESENTS THE FORMULA IN THE CONTEXT OF UNITY BY CONSENT: A BRITISH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THE NATURAL UNIT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION IS THE ISLAND OF IRELAND, WITH A PROVISIO THAT IT CANNOT BE EXERCISED UNLESS OR UNTIL A MAJORITY IN THE NORTH SO AGREE.

- 4. THE EFFECT OF SUCH A STATEMENT WOULD BE TO SHIFT THE CONTEXT FOR DEMOCRATIC DECISION FROM THE UK OR NORTHERN IRELAND TO IRELAND AS A WHOLE, SEEN AS ONE NATIONAL ENTITY (ALBEIT IN TWO PARTS FOR THE TIME BEING). IN THE TALKS PROCESS THE IRISH HAVE SOUGHT 'CONSTITUTIONAL BALANCE' FOR A MOVE ON ARTICLES 2 AND 3. THEY NOW CLAIM TO SEEK IT AS THE PRICE FOR A CESSATION OF VIOLENCE BY PIRA. IT IS NOT FOR ME TO JUDGE THE EFFECT OF SUCH A SHIFT IN HMG'S POSITION ON UNIONIST OPINION. BUT IT WOULD BE A SUBSTANTIAL MOVE, AND BEFORE CONTEMPLATING IT WE

WOULD NEED TO BE SURE THAT THERE WERE VERY STRONG GROUNDS TO BELIEVE THAT REYNOLDS' CLAIM - THAT IT WOULD BRING ABOUT A CESSATION OF VIOLENCE BY PIRA - WAS CORRECT. THE DANGER NOW IS THAT WE WILL BE DRAWN INTO A NEGOTIATION IN WHICH WE WILL BE UNDER PRESSURE TO ACCEPT THE IRISH FORMULATION WITH NO QUID PRO QUO.

5. TODAY'S PRESS ALSO REVEALS THAT HMG PUT FORWARD A 'TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE' ALTERNATIVE DRAFT DECLARATION A WEEK AGO. THERE IS ALSO SPECULATION THAT A PIRA CHRISTMAS CEASEFIRE MIGHT BE INDEFINITELY EXTENDED: THAT THE FORMULA IN PARA 2 ABOVE IS THE CORE OF THE HUME/ADAMS PROCESS: AND THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WILL NOT SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL FOR A TIME LIMIT FOR BRITISH WITHDRAWAL. ALL THIS BEARS THE STAMP OF GOVERNMENT BRIEFINGS.

BLATHERWICK

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