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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1489 OF 14 MAY

INFO PRIORITY BIS NEW YORK, NIO (B) NIO (L) DUBLIN

ROUTINE TO ALL CG IN US

YOUR TELNO 726: PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY TO THE FOUR HORSEMEN

1. THE PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY WAS DELIVERED TO THE OFFICES OF ALL FOUR HORSEMEN THIS MORNING. IN RESPONSE SENATOR KENNEDY HAS ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TO THE PRESS:

BEGINS:

THE CENTRAL POINT OF THE MESSAGE THAT SPEAKER O'NEILL, SENATOR MOYNIHAN, GOVERNOR CAREY, AND I CONVEYED TO PRIME MINISTER THATCHER LAST WEEK IS THAT GREATER FLEXIBILITY BY GREAT BRITAIN ON THE ISSUES OF PRISON ADMINISTRATION INVOLVED IN THE HUNGER STRIKE AT THE MAZE PRISON IN NORTHERN IRELAND IS ESSENTIAL TO AVOID GREATER VIOLENCE.

I CONDEMN ALL VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND. I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT BRITAIN HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO ALL THE PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE COMMUNITY TO PURSUE EVERY POSSIBLE STEP THAT COULD LEAD TO A QUICK, FAIR, AND HUMANITARIAN SETTLEMENT OF THE HUNGER STRIKES, BEFORE ADDITIONAL DEATHS OCCUR. UNFEELING INFLEXIBILITY WILL ACHIEVE NOTHING BUT MORE DEATHS.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESPONSE SHOWS ONLY THE SHADOW OF FLEXIBILITY, WITHOUT THE SUBSTANCE. IT IGNORES POSSIBLE INITIATIVES WHICH COULD RESOLVE THE CURRENT DISPUTE OVER PRISON CONDITIONS.

OBVIOUS AVENUES ARE OPEN FOR SENSIBLE AND REASONABLE COMPROMISES ON THE PRACTICAL ISSUES OF PRISON ADMINISTRATION, WITHOUT COMPROMISING IN ANY WAY ON THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF OPPOSITION TO VIOLENCE.

THE LEADERS OF GREAT BRITAIN HAVE A HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY TO SEEK SUCH A COMPROMISE - SURELY BEFORE MORE HUNGER STRIKERS DIE, BEFORE MORE LIVES ARE LOST IN VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS, BEFORE ALL THE HOPEFUL PROGRESS OF RECENT MONTHS IS LOST - IT IS TIME FOR BRITAIN TO BREAK THIS ENDLESS SPIRAL OF DEATH IN NORTHERN IRELAND, SO THAT LEADERS OF GOODWILL MAY RESUME THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A PEACEFUL AND LASTING SETTLEMENT OF THE CONFLICT.

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2. WE HAVE REITERATED TO KENNEDY'S OFFICE THAT SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS WERE MADE TO THE PRISON REGIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND LAST YEAR, THAT THE HUNGER STRIKERS AND OTHER PROTESTORS HAVE DELIBERATELY CHOSEN NOT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM, AND THAT THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD ABANDON THEIR PROTEST IN RETURN FOR FURTHER SMALL CONCESSIONS FALLING SHORT OF POLITICAL STATUS. WE STRESSED THAT IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES FURTHER GENERALISED CALLS FOR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO COMPROMISE, HOWEVER WELL MEANING, WERE UNHELPFUL.

HENDERSON

Re/WHITFIELD
R-D