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FROM FCO 061740Z AUG

TO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN

TELEGRAM NUMBER 132 OF 6 AUGUST

INFO IMMEDIATE NIO BELFAST

INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON

YOUR TELNO 281: HUNGER STRIKE

1. WE HAVE CONSULTED NIO ABOUT WHAT MR KELLY SAID TO TATHAM, PARTICULARLY ON THE SPECIFIC PROPOSAL CONTAINED IN PARAGRAPH 4 OF TUR, AND THEY HAVE TAKEN THE MIND OF THEIR SECRETARY OF STATE. YOU SHOULD SEEK AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO MR KELLY ON THE FOLLOWING LINES.
2. WE NOTE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC'S OBJECTIVE IS TO END THE HUNGER STRIKE. THERE IS NOTHING BETWEEN US ON THIS - THAT IS ALSO HMG'S AIM. WE DO NOT, HOWEVER, HAVE ANY GROUNDS AT ALL FOR BELIEVING THAT, IF WE DID WHAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC IS NOW PROPOSING, THAT MOVE WOULD CAUSE THE STRIKERS TO END THEIR FAST.
3. MR KELLY WILL APPRECIATE THAT THE RELATIVELY MINOR CHANGES WHICH HMG STANDS READY TO MAKE ARE A LONG WAY FROM THE FIVE DEMANDS OF THE PROTESTERS. THAT THE PROTESTERS STAND BY THOSE DEMANDS WAS MADE ALL TOO CLEAR IN THE ORATION BY MR JIMMY DRUMM OF THE PSF ON 4 AUGUST AT THE GRAVESIDE OF KIERAN DOHERTY (AS REPORTED IN 'THE GUARDIAN' OF 5 AUGUST). HMG'S DIFFICULTY IS THIS: IF WE ARE TO RETAIN CONTROL OF THE PRISON (AND THAT IS FOR HMG A RESPONSIBILITY THEY CANNOT AND WILL NOT ABANDON) THERE ARE ONLY VERY LIMITED IMPROVEMENTS INDEED WHICH CAN BE MADE IN THE REGIME AT THE MAZE (AND IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT JIMMY DRUMM DISCOUNTED IN ADVANCE ANY MOVEMENT ON 'OWN CLOTHES'). IT MAY BE THAT AT SOME POINT OF TIME THE STRIKERS WILL BE LOOKING FOR SOME MOVEMENT, HOWEVER MINOR, TO PROVIDE THEM WITH A COLOURABLE REASON FOR COMING OFF THEIR STRIKE: IF SO, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT AT THAT JUNCTURE TO HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER. IF WE USE UP OUR LIMITED SUPPLY OF POWDER NOW, WITH NO REASON TO THINK IT WILL DO THE

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TRICK, IT WILL HAVE BEEN WASTED AND OUR LOCKER WILL THEN BE BARE WHEN SOMETHING IS NEEDED. WE THEREFORE TAKE THE VIEW THAT WE SHOULD HUSBAND WHAT LITTLE WE HAVE.

4. ONE FURTHER POINT: MR KELLY'S SUGGESTION THAT THE MOVE HE PROPOSED MIGHT END THE STRIKE IS HARDLY BORNE OUT BY HIS OWN BELIEF (RECORDED AT THE END OF YOUR PARAGRAPH 2) THAT THERE IS 'A LONG QUEUE OF VOLUNTEERS' TO REPLACE STRIKERS WHO DIE.

5. FINALLY PLEASE MAKE IT CLEAR TO MR KELLY THAT WE ARE GIVING HIM THE REASONS FOR OUR DECISION NOT TO ACT AS HE SUGGESTED IN STRICT CONFIDENCE. THESE REASONS SUBSTANTIALLY GIVE AWAY OUR TACTICS VIS-A-VIS THE HUNGER STRIKERS AND IT WOULD DO GREAT HARM IF THEY BECAME KNOWN. IN RESPONSE TO QUERIES FROM THE PRESS AS TO HOW WE HAVE REPLIED TO MR KELLY'S PROPOSAL WE SHALL SAY THAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SUCH A MOVE WOULD CAUSE THE STRIKERS TO END THEIR FAST BUT SHALL NOT GIVE ANY FURTHER REASONS.
GILMOUR

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