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PS/SIR I GILMOUR

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MR FERGUSSON

Lord N Gordon-Lennox

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2

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CONFIDENTIAL

FM DUBLIN 301810Z AUGUST 79

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 234 OF 30 AUGUST

Prime Minister: background
for your meeting next week
3/6

MY TELNO 228 : MEETING BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER AND MR LYNCH

1. YOU MAY FIND IT USEFUL TO HAVE MY ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF LORD MOUNTBATTEN'S MURDER ON MR LYNCH AND HIS GOVERNMENT AND AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS OFFERS US AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXTRACT CONCESSIONS, ESPECIALLY ON SECURITY COOPERATION, WHICH HAVE SO FAR BEEN UNOBTAINABLE.

2. MR LYNCH AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE CLEARLY SHOCKED AND FULL OF REGRET AND SHAME. BUT THESE ARE CHEAP COMMODITIES IN THIS COUNTRY. I DO NOT THINK THAT RECENT EVENTS HAVE DONE MUCH MORE THAN NEUTRALISE FOR THE TIME BEING THE REPUBLICAN GROUNDSWELL WHICH WAS BUILDING UP IN FIANNA FAIL AS A RESULT OF BLANEY'S EUROPEAN ELECTION SUCCESS. THE PRESENT OFFERS THE BEST OPPORTUNITY WE ARE LIKELY TO GET FOR OBTAINING

OFFERS THE BEST OPPORTUNITY WE ARE LIKELY TO GET FOR OBTAINING CONCESSIONS FROM THE IRISH. BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE SHALL BE ABLE TO GET WHATEVER WE WANT E.G. REFORM OF THE CONSTITUTION TO ENABLE EXTRADITION FOR POLITICAL OFFENCES.

X 3. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS A FAIR POSSIBILITY THAT WE CAN PERSUADE THE IRISH TO ADOPT PRACTICAL MEASURES TO IMPROVE SECURITY, BOTH ON THE BORDER AND ELSEWHERE, ESPECIALLY IF THEY CAN BE INTRODUCED WITHOUT A PUBLICITY FANFARE ON OUR PART. AS YOU WILL KNOW FROM MY DESPATCH OF 10 AUGUST AND OTHER REPORTS, MR LYNCH IS NOT AT PRESENT IN A STRONG POSITION VIS A VIS HIS PARTY OR THE COUNTRY. AGAIN, AS I HAVE SAID REPEATEDLY, THE IRISH ARE HYPERSENSITIVE TO CRITICISM, REAL OR IMPLIED FROM US, ESPECIALLY IF IT IS MADE PUBLICLY. IT WOULD, THEREFORE, BE UNWISE TO PRESENT ANY IMPROVEMENTS MADE BY MR LYNCH ON SECURITY AS CONCESSIONS TO US.

4. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, CHANGES OF EMPHASIS IN EXISTING POLICY ARE CLEARLY A POSSIBILITY. HOWEVER, EVEN NOW FOR MR LYNCH THERE ARE CERTAIN BASIC BELIEFS OR MYTHS WHICH PUBLIC OPINION WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO RENOUNCE EVEN IF HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO DO SO HIMSELF. HAVING SAID THAT I STILL THINK WE SHOULD TRY TO PERSUADE HIM THAT TO TALK ABOUT IRISH UNITY IS UNREAL (PARA 2 MY TUR).

5. I THINK THAT PROVIDED THAT WHAT WE ASK HIM TO GIVE DOES NOT LOOK REPEAT LOOK LIKE A MOVE AGAINST A UNITED IRELAND, THAT IT DOES NOT INVOLVE CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION AND THAT IT IS NOT MADE TO APPEAR LIKE A CONCESSION IMPOSED ON HIM BY BRITAIN, WE CAN EXPECT HIM TO BE AT LEAST RESPONSIVE. EVEN SO WE CANNOT EXPECT TO OBTAIN MANY UNREQUITED CONCESSIONS. IF WE REALLY WANT A LARGE MEASURE OF INCREASED SECURITY COOPERATION FROM MR LYNCH WE SHOULD TRY TO GIVE HIM SOMETHING WHICH HE CAN REPRESENT AS A MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF POLITICAL PROGRESS. HE HIMSELF CAN ACCEPT AND GET HIS PEOPLE TO ACCEPT FAR MORE AS PART OF A BARGAIN THAN HE CAN AS REPARATIONS EXACTED BY THE BRITISH FOR IRISH SHORTCOMINGS.

6. IT IS WORTH REMEMBERING THAT HE HAS JUST RETURNED FROM PORTUGAL TO A HOSTILE DOMESTIC PRESS. HIS ABSENCE FROM DUBLIN AT A TIME WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER VISITED NORTHERN IRELAND HAS NOT GONE UNNOTICED. OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS HE WILL BE CONCERNED TO DEAL WITH THAT CRITICISM. WHAT HE SAID AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY SHOULD BE SEEN IN THAT LIGHT. AT BALDONNEL BOTH HE AND HIS WIFE WERE VERY DEFENSIVE ABOUT HIS NOT HAVING RETURNED EARLIER FROM PORTUGAL. WE CAN OFFER NO CONVINCING EXPLANATION WHY HE DID NOT

SHOULD BE SEEN IN THAT LIGHT. AT BALDONNEL BOTH HE AND HIS WIFE WERE VERY DEFENSIVE ABOUT HIS NOT HAVING RETURNED EARLIER FROM PORTUGAL. WE CAN OFFER NO CONVINCING EXPLANATION WHY HE DID NOT COME BACK EARLIER, ALTHOUGH HE MAY HAVE CONSIDERED THAT THERE WAS NO NEED TO RETURN UNTIL THE DAY OF THE REMOVAL OF LORD MOUNTBATTEN'S REMAINS. AS YOU WILL KNOW, IN IRISH CUSTOM THE REMOVAL OF THE REMAINS IS AN OCCASION OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE WITH THE FUNERAL.

HAYDON

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SENT AT 30/1900Z JAW

RECD AT 30/1900Z BD