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S E C R E T

Fr. Patrick Ryan

At the conclusion of a meeting in the Secretariat last evening on confidence issues, Ian Burns of the NIO referred briefly to the Fr. Ryan case. He said that, in the view of the British, the arrest of Fr. Ryan in Brussels had been a mistake. All London had asked was that the Belgians keep an eye on Fr. Ryan as they felt his visit to Brussels was operationally significant. However, the Belgians believed that there were guns in the garage of the house where Fr. Ryan was staying and, as a result, they had decided to move in and arrest him.

Asked why, given that no guns had been found, the British did not suggest discreetly to the Belgians that they release Fr. Ryan with a view to continuing to monitor his movements, Burns said that the arrest had generated widespread media interest in Britain and there was, therefore, considerable pressure on London to move for his extradition.

In referring to reports that Fr. Ryan had not been "active" for a considerable number of years, Burns said that, to their knowledge, he had been active as late as 1985 and, as mentioned, was in their view on an operational visit to Brussels when arrested.

DAG
Dermot Gallagher,
29 November, 1988.

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See by Taoiseach
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