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INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON, BIS NEW YORK

DUISBERG TALKS

SUMMARY

1. THE REVELATION OF THE DUISBERG TALKS UNDERLINES BOTH THE GENERAL PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR DEVOLUTION, AND THE IRISH GOVERNMENT'S OWN LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR IT. TAOISEACH NOT GUILTY (AS SUGGESTED BY BBC) OF LEAKING THE TALKS.

DETAIL

2. AFTER THE BBC PUBLISHED THE DUISTPBCZTALKS, AN IRISH GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN LAST NIGHT RULED OUT ANY POSSIBILITY OF A SUSPENSION OF THE WORKINGS OF THE ICC OR SECRETARIAT, OR OF A POSTPONEMENT OF THE ICC NEXT WEEK. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE BBC REPORTS WERE EXAGGERATED AND THAT ANY PROGRESS MADE IN THE TALKS WAS HIGHLY TENTATIVE. NOTABLY ABSENT FROM HIS REMARKS WAS ANY WELCOME FOR THE TALKS THEMSELVES OR ENTHUSIASM ABOUT DEVOLUTION. (THIS HAS DRAWN SOME CRITICISM (EG FROM GERALDINE KENNEDY OF THE PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS).

3. THE EMPHASIS IN MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMENT HAS BEEN ONE OF WELCOME FOR THE TALKS AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE OBJECTIVE OF DEVOLUTION, ALTHOUGH THIS IS MIXED WITH REGRET THAT THE PUBLICITY SHOULD HAVE INTERRUPTED THEM. ONLY THE 'CORK EXAMINER' DRAWS THE CONCLUSION THAT THE NORTHERN PARTIES' UNWILLINGNESS EVEN TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEY HAVE TALKED TO EACH OTHER DEMONSTRATES THE UNLIKELIHOOD OF PROGRESS: OTHER COMMENTATORS SEEM CONFIDENT THAT MEANS CAN BE FOUND FOR FURTHER TALKING.

4. THE BBC'S SUGGESTION THAT THE TAOISEACH HAD PROMPTED ITS REPORT BY REMARKS IN THE DAIL ON 1 FEBRUARY HAS FOUND LITTLE SUPPORT HERE. THE TAOISEACH'S COMMENTS IN THE DAIL, THOUGH CRYPTIC, WERE SET FIRMLY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTACTS BETWEEN THE DUBLIN GOVERNMENT AND THE UNIONISTS, NOT IN THE CONTEXT OF TALKS WITHIN NORTHERN IRELAND. THIS IS ACCEPTED BY FINE GAEL, ALTHOUGH MR O'MALLEY (PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS) HAS, FOR POLITICAL ADVANTAGE, ENDORSED THE BBC SUGGESTION THAT MR HAUGHEY 'BLEW THE GAFF'.

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