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(PARIS)
Mr Russell

To Assistant Secretaries Political, / Economic, / Anglo-Irish, /
EC Affairs / Administration - for information -

Mr John Lawton, Political

Mr Tom Lyons, Foreign Trade

Mr Noel Fahey, EC Affairs

Mr Joe Lynch, Cultural

Ms Anne Anderson, Anglo-Irish

Re: Briefing for visit by the President to France for
Bicentennial Celebrations, 12-15 July, 1989

The President and Mrs Hillery will be visiting Paris next month as guests of President Mitterrand in connection with the celebrations for the Bicentennial of the French Revolution.

In addition to a private meeting with President Mitterrand, the President will be meeting in the course of the celebrations with the about thirty Heads of State or Government who will also be present.

Accordingly, it would be appreciated if briefing material could be provided which takes account of all the major international developments as well as Ireland's relations with France.

I should be grateful if appropriate material could be forwarded for collation to Mr Vincent Herlihy, Protocol I, not later than 12 noon on Monday next, 3 July, 1989.

Thomas M. Don

Chief of Protocol

27 June, 1989

Mr. Braggan,

*Very
grateful if you
could supply usual-
type briefing.
PR 3/7.*

French Attitude on Northern Ireland

1. The attitude of the French Government to the situation in Northern Ireland has tended to be one of neutrality influenced by the good relations that France enjoys with both Ireland and Britain. At the time of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the French Government congratulated both Governments on their determination and courage which enabled them to take this historic step which it saw "opening the possibility of peaceful progress for the inhabitants of Northern Ireland who have suffered so much from violence and instability".

2. The French authorities have cooperated with the Irish and British authorities in combatting terrorism, especially since the emergence of links between Irish and French terrorist groups such as Action Directe. In August 1987 four people were convicted of illegal importation of arms into France through the port of Le Harve. The arms were intended for eventual shipment to an INLA faction in Ireland. In November 1987, the French authorities successfully intercepted the ship "Eksund" off the western coast of France, as it was apparently on its way from Libya to Ireland with a large shipment of arms. Five crew members are still awaiting trial in France. Most recently, in April this year the French authorities arrested in Paris three members of the Protestant group, Ulster Resistance, foiling their attempt to sell sophisticated arms technology to South Africa in return for weapons.

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