

WJH 205/3/88
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005201 **
MDADAN 9354

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FM WASHINGTON
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 659

OF 120130Z MAR 88
AND TO IMMEDIATE NIO(L), NIO(B)
INFO IMMEDIATE BTDO NEW YORK, BIS NEW YORK
INFO PRIORITY DUBLIN

8/16/88
ADVANCE COPY

MY TELNO 644: ST PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF
IRELAND
SUMMARY

1. AS PREDICTED, STATEMENT HIGHLY CRITICAL OF HMG ACROSS THE
FIELD OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. BUT SOME POSITIVE
FEATURES, INCLUDING A WELCOME FOR OUR PROPOSED FAIR EMPLOYMENT
LEGISLATION. ANY REACTION BY HMG SHOULD BE MEASURED AND LOW-KEY.
DETAIL

2. MIFT CONTAINS THE EMBARGOED (UNTIL 17 MARCH) TEXT (WHICH WE
OBTAINED LATE ON 11 MARCH FROM CONGRESSMAN FOLEY'S OFFICE) OF THE
ST. PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND WHICH IS NOW
BEING CIRCULATED FOR SIGNATURE BY AS MANY MEMBERS OF BOTH HOUSES
OF CONGRESS AS POSSIBLE. (160, A RECORD, SIGNED LAST YEAR.)
THERE IS THEREFORE NO REALISTIC POSSIBILITY OF AMENDING THE TEXT AT
THIS STAGE.

3. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, THE STATEMENT:

- (A) SIGNALS CONTINUING STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE ANGLO-IRISH
AGREEMENT, AND RECOGNISES THE PROGRESS WHICH HAS BEEN MADE
UNDER THE AGREEMENT IN ADDRESSING THE GRIEVANCES OF THE
NATIONALIST COMMUNITY;
- (B) WELCOMES HMG'S PROPOSED FAIR EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION;
- (C) RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF JOB-CREATING INVESTMENT IN
ENDING DISCRIMINATION; AND
- (D) CONDEMNS UNEQUIVOCALLY THE QUOTE BOMB AND THE BULLET
UNQUOTE, AND THOSE IN IRELAND AND THE UNITED STATES WHO
SUPPORT TERRORISM.

4. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, HOWEVER, THE STATEMENT IS, AS SUGGESTED
IN MY TUR, MUCH MORE CRITICAL OF HMG THAN IN ANY RECENT YEAR SINCE
THE HUNGER STRIKES. IT:

- (A) EXPRESSES DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE QUOTE SYSTEM UNQUOTE OF THE
ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND, INCLUDING THE
DIPLOCK COURTS (FREQUENTLY MENTIONED BY THE BIAGGI GROUP,
BUT NEVER BEFORE BY THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND) AND THE QUOTE
EMERGENCY LEGISLATION UNQUOTE:

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- (B) DESCRIBES THE STALKER/SAMPSON DECISION AS QUOTE INTOLERABLE UNQUOTE, EXPRESSES OUTRAGE AT THE THAIN DECISION, AND STATES THAT THOSE EVENTS AND THE AUGHNACLOY INCIDENT HAVE CREATED THE PERCEPTION THAT THE BRITISH SECURITY FORCES ARE ABOVE THE LAW:
- (C) URGES HMG TO CONSIDER STEPS TO RESOLVE THE BIRMINGHAM SIX CONTROVERSY: AND
- (D) USES SOME UNFORTUNATE LANGUAGE ON FAIR EMPLOYMENT, SPEAKING OF A QUOTE CURRENT INGRAINED SYSTEM OF JOB DISCRIMINATION UNQUOTE IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

COMMENT

5. THE STRENGTH OF THE LANGUAGE ON STALKER/SAMPSON AND THAIN WAS PREDICTABLE. WHAT IS MORE DISAPPOINTING IS THE RANGE OF OTHER SECURITY/JUDICIAL SUBJECTS RAISED (PARTICULARLY THE BIRMINGHAM SIX), AND THE GENERALLY ILL-INFORMED AND DISTORTED WAY IN WHICH THOSE SUBJECTS ARE TREATED, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE EFFORTS WHICH WE HAVE MADE AT MINISTERIAL AND OTHER LEVELS OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS AND MONTHS TO EDUCATE THOSE ON THE HILL INTERESTED IN IRISH ISSUES IN THE REALITIES OF THESE PROBLEMS.

6. OVERALL, HOWEVER, I DOUBT WHETHER THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF THE STATEMENT WILL BE AS DAMAGING AS IT MIGHT APPEAR AT FIRST SIGHT. THE ST. PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND, AS OPPOSED TO THAT BY THE PRESIDENT (FROM WHICH WE ARE ASSURED THAT WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR), DOES NOT USUALLY RECEIVE MUCH ATTENTION IN THE NATIONAL PRESS. IN ANY CASE, THE PASSAGES CRITICAL OF HMG ARE WRAPPED IN OTHERS MORE COMPLIMENTARY OF OUR EFFORTS. THE MOST SERIOUS DAMAGE LIKELY TO BE DONE BY THE STATEMENT WILL LIE IN THE WAY IN WHICH IT IS USED SELECTIVELY BY OUR CRITICS IN THE GREENER PARTS OF THE IRISH-AMERICAN COMMUNITY, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MACBRIDE CAMPAIGN, IN THE WEEKS AND MONTHS AHEAD.

7. AGAINST THAT BACKGROUND, MY PRELIMINARY VIEW IS THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO REACT PUBLICLY TO THE STATEMENT BY ISSUING ONE OF OUR OWN. TO DO SO WOULD PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF OUR CRITICS BY DRAWING FAR MORE ATTENTION TO THESE ISSUES AT A NATIONAL LEVEL THAN THEY WOULD OTHERWISE RECEIVE. AND WE WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO WIN CONVINCINGLY IN THE ENSUING DEBATE ON THE VARIOUS SUBJECTS ON WHICH WE ARE CRITICISED, ON EACH OF WHICH WE WOULD BE THOUGHT TO BE ON THE DEFENSIVE AND TO HAVE LITTLE NEW TO SAY. WE SHALL, HOWEVER, NEED TO THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT THE LINE WHICH OUR SPOKESMEN, BOTH HERE AND IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, SHOULD TAKE IN RESPONDING TO THE INEVITABLE PRESS ENQUIRIES ABOUT OUR VIEW OF THE STATEMENT. WE SHALL SEND ADVICE ON THIS EARLY NEXT WEEK, BUT HERE AGAIN MY PRELIMINARY VIEW IS THAT OUR LINE SHOULD BE AS MEASURED AND LOW-KEY

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AS POSSIBLE IF WE ARE TO AVOID PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF OUR
OPPONENTS.

8. SEE MIFT

9. FCO PLEASE ADVANCE TO LEACH (SIL DIVISION, NIO(L)).

ACLAND

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