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TO PRIORITY FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE
TELEGRAM NUMBER 3000 OF 4 OCTOBER 1979
INFO NIO BELFAST, DUBLIN, BIS NEW YORK.

*Rome Irish**ant*
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NORTHERN IRELAND: BRITISH INFORMATION EFFORT IN THE UNITED STATES.

1. WHEN I SAW YOU IN NEW YORK LAST WEEK WE HAD A WORD ABOUT US CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC OPINION AND NORTHERN IRELAND. I SAID THAT THE MAIN PROBLEM WAS THE COMPLETE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE PART OF AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT THE POLITICAL REALITIES OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND IN PARTICULAR ABOUT THE STATE OF MIND OF THE PEOPLE OF THE PROVINCE; AND I SUGGESTED THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS A SYSTEMATIC CAMPAIGN TO BRING THE FACTS HOME.
2. THE MAIN CURRENTS OF US PUBLIC OPINION ON NORTHERN IRELAND WERE DESCRIBED IN WASHINGTON TELS NOS .1684 AND 2514. THE PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN, ARE:
 - (I) IN TERMS OF DOMESTIC US POLITICS WE HAVE NO QUOTE CONSTITUENCY UNQUOTE TO BALANCE THE POWERFUL IRISH AMERICAN ETHNIC LOBBY, WHICH OVERWHELMINGLY ESPOUSES IRISH UNITY.
 - (II) THIS SENTIMENTAL SUPPORT FOR IRISH UNITY IS BEING EXPLOITED IN A SUSTAINED AND INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN BY AMERICAN SYMPATHISERS OF THE IRA.
 - (III) THE IRISH GOVERNMENT AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES HERE ARE BEST PLACED TO INFLUENCE OPINION WITHIN THE IRISH AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO LEAVE THIS TASK TO THEM. WE CAN RELY ON THEM TO DENOUNCE TERRORISM, TO DISCOURAGE SUPPORT FOR THE IRA AND ORGANISATIONS SYMPATHETIC TO IT AND GENERALLY TO PREACH MODERATION. TO THE EXTENT THAT DUBLIN AND LONDON ARE SEEN TO BE WORKING IN HARMONY OVER NORTHERN IRELAND THE IRISH INFORMATION EFFORT IN THE US CAN USEFULLY COMPLEMENT OUR OWN. BUT WE CANNOT EXPECT THE IRISH TO EXPLAIN THE STATE OF OPINION IN NORTHERN IRELAND OR THE BASIS OF BRITISH POLICIES.
 - (IV) OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORT SHOULD THEREFORE BE DIRECTED PRIMARILY AT MODERATE AND/OR UNCOMMITTED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS (INCLUDING RESPONSIBLE IRISH AMERICAN POLITICIANS) AND OPINION MOULDERS IN THE PRESS, RADIO AND TELEVISION, BOTH AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AND IN THE MAIN PROVINCIAL CENTRES.

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3. THE MAIN THEMES WE SHOULD AIM TO GET ACROSS TO THESE PEOPLE ARE:

(I) THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND, IN PARTICULAR, THE RANGE AND DIVERSITY OF LEGITIMATE NORTHERN IRELAND OPINION. WE NEED TO BRING OUT BOTH THE EXTENT OF COMMON GROUND IN THE ATTITUDES OF THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES AND THE STRENGTH WITH WHICH DIVERGENT OPINIONS ARE HELD.

(II) AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, WE MUST CONTINUE PATIENTLY TO EXPLAIN HMG'S AIMS AND POLICIES, STRESSING THE IMPARTIALITY OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION UNDER DIRECT RULE AND THE STRENGTH OF HMG'S COMMITMENT TO PROMOTING NEW POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH COMMUNITIES. AS I SUGGESTED IN MY TELNO 2515, IN ORDER FAVOURABLY TO INFLUENCE MODERATE US OPINION IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT THE PROSPECT OF POLITICAL PROGRESS.

(III) WE SHOULD MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO IDENTIFY THE PIRA WITH CRUDE TERRORISM AND TO SEPARATE PIRA FROM THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN AMERICAN MINDS. THE MURDER OF LORD MOUNTBATTEN AND THE POPE'S DENUNCIATIONS OF VIOLENCE HAVE CREATED A MORE FAVOURABLE CLIMATE OF OPINION ON THIS SCORE. BUT WE SHALL NEED TO KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM BY OUR OWN EFFORTS - EG ON THE LINES SUGGESTED IN ROBINSONS LETTER OF 2 AUGUST TO STOWE (COPIED TO FERGUSSON) AND SQUIRE'S LETTER OF 8 AUGUST TO ALLAN (OID).

(IV) WE MUST CONTINUE TO DEFEND OUR HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IN NORTHERN IRELAND. HOWEVER UNFAIRLY, WE SHALL REMAIN VULNERABLE TO ATTACK ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND MUST EXPECT THE EXTREMISTS TO EXPLOIT THIS THEME PERSISTENTLY AND UNSCRUPULOUSLY.

4. BRITISH OFFICIALS AND OFFICIAL INFORMATION SERVICES IN THE US CAN AND DO SEEK TO PROMOTE BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HMG'S POLICIES AND TO COUNTER THE MORE OUTRAGEOUS MISREPRESENTATIONS OF THE BRITISH ROLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WHICH APPEAR IN THE PRESS, TV AND RADIO. BUT IN GENERAL A BRITISH OFFICIAL VOICE OR SIGNATURE CARRIES MUCH LESS CREDIBILITY HERE THAN AN IRISH ONE (AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION HAS IN ANY CASE BECOME DEEPLY SCEPTICAL OF ALL OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS FROM ANY SOURCE). IF WE ARE TO SUCCEED IN CONVEYING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC OPINION IN NORTHERN IRELAND OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORT IN THE UNITED STATES NEEDS TO HAVE MORE OF A NORTHERN IRELAND ACCENT.

5. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WAYS IN WHICH THIS MIGHT BE DONE AND WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN SUGGESTED TO THE DEPARTMENT (HALLS LETTER OF 14 JUNE TO ALLAN): FOR EXAMPLE.

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(I) WE SHOULD COMMISSION ARTICLES BY PROMINENT NORTHERN IRELAND PERSONALITIES FOR PUBLICATION IN THE US. MATERIAL BY MODERATE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINORITY COMMUNITY WOULD BE PARTICULARLY VALUABLE.

(II) WE SHOULD EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF PROMOTING THE PUBLICATION OF SUITABLE MATERIAL IN THE CATHOLIC PRESS IN THE UK WHICH WE COULD THEN ARRANGE TO HAVE REPRODUCED IN THE US CATHOLIC PRESS, IN ORDER TO COUNTER THE INCREASING USE OF THE US CATHOLIC PRESS BY THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS AS A VEHICLE FOR ANTI-BRITISH PROPAGANDA.

(III) WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE MODERATE NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICIANS CHURCHMEN, TRADE UNIONISTS ETC TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES TO PUT THEIR VIEWS ACROSS TO SUITABLE AUDIENCES HERE AND TO LOBBY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS (BUT WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL TO AVOID THEIR APPEARING AS OFFICIALLY SPONSORED PROPAGANDISTS: SUITABLE SPONSORSHIP WOULD THEREFORE REQUIRE THOUGHT). WE SHOULD NOT BE TOO CONCERNED IF WHAT THEY SAY IS NOT ALWAYS WHOLLY CONSISTENT WITH HMG'S POLICIES: THE OBJECT WOULD BE TO ENABLE THE VARIETIES OF NORTHERN IRELAND OPINION TO BE HEARD IN THE UNITED STATES.

(IV) LONDON BASED CORRESPONDENTS OF US NEWSPAPERS, AGENCIES AND NETWORKS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO REPORT DIRECTLY AND REGULARLY FROM NORTHERN IRELAND (AND NOT JUST WHEN THERE IS A SENSATIONAL STORY TO BE COVERED).

6. I AM AWARE THAT MOST OF THESE SUGGESTIONS ARE ALREADY BEING CONSIDERED IN SOME FORM. BUT THEY MAY NEED TO BE BROUGHT TOGETHER SO THAT WE CAN MOVE FROM THE DEFENSIVE.

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