

GPS 295
CONFIDENTIAL
FM DUBLIN 22/1700Z JULY 1980

CONFIDENTIAL

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 209 OF 22 JULY

AND INFO TO N I O (BELFAST)

MARTIN MEEHAN

1. IN ABSENCE OF MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, I WAS ASKED BY NELIGAN, ACTING HEAD OF D F A, TO CALL ABOUT THE MEEHAN CASE. HE SAID THAT MR HAUGHEY WISHED US TO KNOW THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WERE ACTUALLY WORRIED ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS BUT WERE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE LIKELY POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF MEEHAN'S DEATH. ON THE RECENT S D L P VISIT, HUME HAD SAID THAT HIS DEATH WOULD HAVE MOST UNFORTUNATE CONSEQUENCES POLITICALLY IN THE NORTH. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WERE EQUALLY WORRIED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE EFFECT OF HIS DEATH IN THE REPUBLIC.

2. NELIGAN SAID THAT THEY WONDERED WHETHER, IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, H M G COULD NOT CONSIDER MAKING SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEEHAN'S APPEAL TO BE HEARD OR AT THE VERY LEAST MAKE A STATEMENT NOMINATING A DAY EARLY IN THE NEW LAW TERM WHEN IT WOULD BE HEARD. IT SEEMED TO THEM THAT UNLIKE THE H-BLOCK, THERE WAS NO POINT OF PRINCIPLE IN THIS CASE. I SAID I REALLY COULD NOT COMMENT ON WHAT THE POSSIBILITIES MIGHT BE BUT I WOULD REPORT AT ONCE WHAT HE HAD SAID. INCIDENTALLY AS SEEN FROM HIM, IT IS SURPRISING THAT WE HAVE NOT MADE PUBLIC OFFICIALLY THE FACT THAT MEEHAN'S APPEAL COULD HAVE BEEN HEARD IN THE LAST LAW TERM BUT HIS CASE WAS NOT READY

3. I SHOULD ADD THAT NELIGAN MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT SYMPATHISE WITH OUR DIFFICULTY IN THIS CASE BUT VERY GREATLY HOPED THAT WE COULD SHOW ENOUGH INGENUITY TO GET US ALL OUT OF A DANGEROUS SITUATION.

4. CLEARLY, THE IRISH GOVERNMENT ARE VERY WORRIED. WHATEVER THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF MEEHAN'S CASE, HIS DEATH WOULD GIVE MUCH IMPETUS TO THE EXTREME REPUBLICAN WING OF FIANNA FAIL, MAKING MR HAUGHEY'S POSITION MORE DIFFICULT, AND UNLOCK THE TRADITIONAL ANTI-BRITISH RESPONSES ON A WIDE SCALE.

FIGG

F I L E S

RID
NAD
OID
IPD
WED
MAED
NEWS D
SEC D
PUSD
PS
PS/LPS

PS/MR HURD
PS/MR RIDLEY
PS/MR BLAKER
PS/PUS

CHIEF CLERK
MR ADAMS

MR FERGUSON
LORD N G LENNOX
MISS BROWN
SIR A ACLAND
CONFIDENTIAL

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION
NORTHERN IRELAND