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STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS:
UNITED KINGDOM.

1. THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WORLDWIDE IS PUBLISHED TODAY. WE HAVE BEEN ASKING FOR A COPY OF THE SECTION ON THE UNITED KINGDOM FOR SOME TIME BUT THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAY THEY WERE PREVENTED BY CONGRESSIONAL RULES FROM GIVING IT TO US UNTIL THIS MORNING. THEY HAD HOPED TO TELEGRAPH THE TEXT TO THE US EMBASSY IN LONDON IN ADVANCE BUT PRODUCTION DIFFICULTIES APPARENTLY MADE THIS IMPOSSIBLE.

2. THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT (WHICH HAS TO BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS EACH YEAR UNDER THE TERMS OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT) COVERS VIRTUALLY EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD. AS IN THE PAST, THIS YEAR'S REPORT ON THE UNITED KINGDOM DEALS PRINCIPALLY WITH NORTHERN IRELAND. IT IS FACTUAL, BALANCED AND UNPOLEMICAL IN TONE. THE MAIN DIFFERENCES COMPARED WITH 1979 LIE IN DESCRIPTIONS OF EVENTS OVER THE LAST YEAR, EG THE BENNETT COMMITTEE REPORT AND SUBSEQUENT ACTION AND THE HANDLING OF THE MAZE PRISON PROTEST. THERE IS ALSO A SECTION ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND ECONOMY AND MORE DETAILED COVERAGE THAN HITHERTO OF LEGISLATION COVERING CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

3. THE REPORT OPENS WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE LEADING ROLE PLAYED BY BRITAIN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES. IT SAYS THAT THE LONG TRADITIONS OF THE BRITISH PEOPLE ON MATTERS OF FAIR PLAY, LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND INDIVIDUAL

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RIGHTS ARE QUOTE BROUGHT TO A TEST BY THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND, WHERE THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT STRIVES TO PRESERVE PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMBAT TERRORIST VIOLENCE WITHIN A SHARPLY DIVIDED COMMUNITY WHILE ENSURING RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS FOR THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND UNQUOTE. THE REPORT DESCRIBES THE CASES BROUGHT AGAINST THE UNITED KINGDOM BY THE IRISH GOVERNMENT IN THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, THE COURT'S REJECTION OF CHARGES OF TORTURE AGAINST THE UK, AND THE BRITISH UNDERTAKING THAT THE QUOTE FIVE TECHNIQUES UNQUOTE WOULD NOT BE USED AGAIN. A SECTION ON THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND BENNETT REPORTS DESCRIBES THE DECISIONS OF THE DPP IN THE CASES HIGHLIGHTED BY BENNETT AS WELL AS THE ACCEPTANCE BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLICE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES AND THE FACT THAT THESE QUOTE HAVE BEEN OR ARE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED UNQUOTE. THE REPORT ALSO DESCRIBES THE ALLEGATIONS MADE BY DR ROBERT IRWIN, TOGETHER WITH THE STEPS TAKEN TO INVESTIGATE DR IRWIN'S CHARGES.

4. THE REPORT DESCRIBES IN SOME DETAIL THE ABANDONMENT OF SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE MAZE PRISON PROTEST. IT BRINGS OUT CLEARLY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATUTORY RIGHTS AND ^{NON} STATUTORY PRIVILEGES AND THE STRICT ADHERENCE TO PRISONERS' RIGHTS TO TAKE EXERCISE. IT NOTES THAT THE POSITION ADOPTED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS SUPPORTED BY PARLIAMENT AND BOTH MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. IT DOES NOT GIVE DETAILS OF THE QUOTE DIRTY UNQUOTE PROTEST, BUT CONCLUDES QUOTE PRISON AUTHORITIES ROUTINELY ROTATE PRISONERS TO CLEAN CELLS, TO REDUCE THE RISKS FROM UNHYGIENIC CONDITIONS, WHICH, AS THEY POINT OUT, ARE CREATED SOLELY BY THE ACTIONS OF THE PRISONERS THEMSELVES UNQUOTE.

5. UNDER THE HEADING QUOTE ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT UNQUOTE THE REPORT COVERS THE WORKINGS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND (EMERGENCY PROVISIONS) ACT OF 1973 AND THE PREVENTION OF TERRORISM (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) ACT OF 1976. IT NOTES THE DECLARED INTENTION OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND STANDING ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO CONSIDER THE CONTINUING NEED FOR EMERGENCY POWERS BUT MAKES NO (NO) REFERENCE TO THE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION AS DESCRIBED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 11 DECEMBER.

6. A NEW SECTION IN THE REPORT ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND ECONOMY TALKS OF QUOTE STRONG ALLEGATIONS OVER THE YEARS OF SUBSTANTIAL VARIANCES BETWEEN THE ECONOMIC STATUS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND UNQUOTE AND STATES THAT, DESPITE EFFORTS BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO REDRESS THE IMBALANCE, QUOTE THE PROTESTANT PART OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO BE MORE PROSPEROUS, TO BE ON THE AVERAGE MORE HIGHLY SKILLED, AND TO CONTROL MOST OF THE ECONOMY UNQUOTE. MENTION IS MADE OF LARGE ECONOMIC SUBSIDIES TO NORTHERN IRELAND AND TO WHAT IS DESCRIBED AS THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S EXPECTATION THAT AN IMPROVED ECONOMIC SITUATION WILL HAVE A FAVOURABLE IMPACT ON THE POLITICAL PROBLEM. BUT THE REPORT CONCLUDES THAT QUOTE THE LONG TERM ECONOMIC PROSPECT IS STILL UNCERTAIN UNQUOTE.

7. THE SECTION IN THE REPORT ON RACIAL DISCRIMINATION REFERS TO QUOTE OCCASIONAL AND WELL-PUBLICISED DISTURBANCES ARISING FROM RACIAL FRICTIONS UNQUOTE, BUT ADDS THAT RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN ALL FIELDS IS EFFECTIVELY BARRED BY LEGISLATION AND CONCLUDES THAT THERE IS NO MAJOR DISTINCTION BETWEEN LEGAL NORMS AND PRACTICES REGARDING MINORITY RIGHTS.

8. PRESS ATTENTION ON THE REPORT HERE HAS SO FAR FOCUSED ON IRAN AND ON THE REPORT'S CRITICISM OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES SINCE THE OVERTHROW OF THE SHAH. THE STATE DEPARTMENT ANTICIPATE LITTLE INTEREST IN THE SECTION ON THE UNITED KINGDOM ALTHOUGH THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS WILL PROBABLY AS USUAL, ATTACK THE REPORT AS A WHITEWASH.

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9. WE IMAGINE THAT ANY CRITICISM OF THE REPORT AT HOME IS LIKELY TO CENTRE IN THE FACT THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT ARE COMMENTING AT ALL ON OUR AFFAIRS. WITHOUT GETTING INTO SUBSTANCE, IT MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE FOR NEWS DEPARTMENT TO SAY THAT THEY UNDERSTAND THE STATE DEPARTMENT ARE REQUIRED BY LAW TO SUBMIT AN ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT TO CONGRESS: THAT BRITAIN IS INCLUDED ALONG WITH OTHER NATO COUNTRIES (AND ALMOST EVERY OTHER COUNTRY IN THE WORLD): THAT THIS YEAR'S REPORT FOLLOWS THE PATTERN OF PREVIOUS YEARS IN GIVING A FACTUAL AND BALANCED ACCOUNT OF DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE LAST YEAR AND THAT IT HIGHLIGHTS THE LONG TRADITIONS OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

10. FULL TEXT FOLLOWS BY BAG.

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