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DESKBY 131400Z

FROM DELHI 131210Z APR 81

TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 404 OF 13/4/81

FOLLOWING FOR SAD AND NO10.

VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER: RACE RELATIONS IN BRITAIN AND THE NATIONALITY BILL

1. RACE RELATIONS IN BRITAIN AND THE NATIONALITY BILL CONTINUE TO ATTRACT ALMOST DAILY ATTENTION IN THE INDIAN PRESS. THE STATESMAN, THE DOYEN OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS, CARRIED ON 11 APRIL A LONG ARTICLE ENTITLED QUOTE BRITAIN'S RACE BILL UNQUOTE BY PROFESSOR MICHAEL DUMMETT OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY, WHO INVITED THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE TO QUOTE CONVEY TO MRS THATCHER THEIR DISMAY AT THE FINAL REPUDIATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH IDEA BY THIS BILL WHICH UNILATERALLY ABOLISHES THE COMMON STATUS ALL COMMONWEALTH CITIZENS NOW BEAR UNQUOTE. EDITORIAL COMMENT IN OTHER PAPERS HAS BEEN MORE INTEMPERATE. THE PIONEER REFERRED AT LENGTH ON 7 APRIL TO QUOTE RACIST BRITAIN UNQUOTE WHILE SEVERAL PAPERS HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT THE ALLEGATIONS THAT IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN BRITAIN HAVE BEEN STERILISED WITHOUT THEIR KNOWLEDGE, THE INFLUENTIAL TIMES OF INDIA UNDER THE HEADLINE QUOTE NEVER ENDING HORRORS UNQUOTE. TODAY, THE BRIXTON RIOT IS FRONT PAGE NEWS, THOUGH SOME PAPERS SEE ECONOMIC RATHER THAN RACIAL TENSIONS AS THE CAUSE.
2. ON THE PLUS SIDE, SEVERAL OF THE MAJOR PAPERS HAVE CARRIED RECENT STATEMENTS BY THE HOME SECRETARY AND TODAY'S HINDUSTAN TIMES, DELHI'S LARGHEST CIRCULATING ENGLISH DAILY, CARRIES THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO THE INDIAN PRESS ON THE EDITORIAL PAGE UNDER THE HEADLINE QUOTE THATCHER PROMISES RACIAL EQUALITY UNQUOTE.
3. IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO ASSUME THAT THESE ISSUES WILL CONTINUE TO FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN THE PRESS THROUGHOUT THE VISIT, PARTICULARLY IN EDITORIALS ON 15 APRIL. AS WE HAVE INDICATED PREVIOUSLY (MY TELNO 244) THERE MAY ALSO BE DEMONSTRATIONS DURING THE VISIT THOUGH THESE ARE UNLIKELY TO GO BEYOND BANNER WAVING AND THE SHOUTING OF SLOGANS WHICH ARE A NOT UNCOMMON PART OF THE DELHI SCENE.

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14

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4. A FURTHER FEATURE OF DELHI OF WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER AND HER PARTY MAY WISH TO BE AWARE IS THAT PROMINENT VISITORS DO NOT ATTRACT LARGE CROWDS. PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING, BREZHNEV AND THE PRINCE OF WALES, TO CITE THREE VERY DIFFERENT VISITORS, DROVE THROUGH RELATIVELY EMPTY STREETS ON ARRIVAL.

THOMSON

*MINITAL
S.A.D.*

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No. 10 DOWNING STREET

2

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