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TO IMMEDIATE CERTAIN MISSIONS AND DEPENDENT TERRITORIES
GUIDANCE TELEGRAM NUMBER 117 OF 28 SEPTEMBER 1983

NORTHERN IRELAND: BREAKOUT FROM THE MAZE PRISON.

1. ON 25 SEPTEMBER 38 REPUBLICAN PRISONERS ESCAPED FROM THE MAZE PRISON NEAR BELFAST. 19 HAVE SO FAR BEEN RECAPTURED (BY MIDDAY 28 SEPTEMBER). INTENSE EFFORTS TO RECAPTURE THE REMAINING 19 CONTINUE.

LINE TO TAKE

2. YOU SHOULD TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO LIMIT THE PROPAGANDA BENEFIT THE IRA WILL TRY TO REAP FROM THE OUTBREAK. AS THE ESCAPEES ARE EASILY IDENTIFIABLE THEY ARE LIKELY IN TIME TO BE RECAPTURED (THE IRISH HAVE OFFERED THEIR FULL COOPERATION). IN THE MEANTIME THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO BE OF MUCH OPERATIONAL VALUE TO THE PROVISIONAL IRA AND THE TASK OF HIDING THEM MAY WELL DIVERT CONSIDERABLE ENERGY.

3. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT REGARD THE OUTBREAK MOST SERIOUSLY. MR PRIOR HAS ASKED SIR JAMES HENNESSY, CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PRISONS, TO CONDUCT AN ENQUIRY. IT WILL BE PROMPT, RIGOROUS AND SEARCHING. MEANWHILE YOU SHOULD RESTRICT COMMENT TO THE ABOVE WHILE NOT COMMENTING ON THE DETAILS OF THE OUTBREAK OR ON SPECULATION ABOUT LAX SECURITY. THE MATTER IS IN EFFECT SUB JUDICE.

BACKGROUND

4. THE ESCAPEES WERE FROM BLOCK H7 WHICH HOUSES 127 PRISONERS. OTHERS HAD THE CHANCE TO ESCAPE BUT IT IS KNOWN THAT A NUMBER

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REFUSED. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT IS OPPOSED TO THE INTERNAL SEGREGATION OF PRISONERS FOR WHICH BOTH REPUBLICAN AND MORE RECENTLY 'LOYALIST' PRISONERS HAVE CAMPAIGNED, IT SO HAPPENS THAT THIS PARTICULAR BLOCK WAS AT THE TIME ONLY OCCUPIED BY REPUBLICANS. THIS MADE THE OUTBREAK EASIER TO ORGANISE. AMONG THOSE WHO ESCAPED 21 WERE SERVING LIFE IMPRISONMENT: OF THOSE AT LARGE 8 ARE LIFERS. ONE PRISON OFFICER WAS MURDERED IN THE OUTBREAK AND 7 WERE INJURED.

5. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS DESCRIBED THE OUTBREAK AS 'THE GRAVEST INCIDENT IN OUR PRISON HISTORY'. MR PRIOR HAS SAID THAT THE ESCAPEES 'WILL BE HUNTED DOWN WHETHER THEY ARE IN THE NORTH OR THE SOUTH OF IRELAND'. DR FITZGERALD, THE IRISH PRIME MINISTER, HAS SAID THAT THE REPUBLIC WILL NOT BE A HAVEN FOR THESE MEN AND THE IRISH AUTHORITIES HAVE INDICATED THAT IF CAUGHT IN THE REPUBLIC THEY COULD BE TRIED UNDER THE EXTRA-TERRITORIAL LEGISLATION. THE IRISH HAVE DEPLOYED LARGE NUMBERS OF POLICE AND SOLDIERS IN THE SEARCH OPERATION. SIX OF THE EIGHT ESCAPEES FROM THE CRUMLIN ROAD PRISON, BELFAST, IN 1981 WERE CAUGHT AND TRIED IN THE REPUBLIC, WHERE THEY ARE NOW SERVING SENTENCES FOR ESCAPING FROM LAWFUL CUSTODY.

6. THE PROVISIONALS CLEARLY REGARD THE LATEST ESCAPE AS A PROPAGANDA TONIC FOR THEIR FLAGGING MORALE (SEE GUIDANCE TELNO 115). IT HAS ENABLED THEM TO RELEASE, WITHOUT LOSS OF FACE, RAYMOND GILMOUR, FATHER OF THE CONVERTED TERRORIST HARRY KIRKPATRICK, ON 27 SEPTEMBER AFTER 9 MONTHS' CAPTIVITY. PIRA AND THEIR SYMPATHISERS OVERSEAS WILL BE DOING ALL IN THEIR POWER TO REAP AS MUCH PROPAGANDA BENEFIT FROM THE ESCAPE AS POSSIBLE.

7. FOR WELLINGTON. PLEASE SHOW THIS GUIDANCE TO MR WHITNEY.

8. FOR WASHINGTON. YOU MAY CARE TO PASS A COPY TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY.

HOWE

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