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DESKBY 081430Z  
FM FCO 081400Z DEC 81  
TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1889 OF 8 DEC  
INFO : IMMEDIATE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE, BELFAST:  
IMMEDIATE DUBLIN

CLARK VISIT TO DUBLIN : ANGLO-IRISH MATTERS : RTE INTERVIEW

1. THE MEDIA HAVE CARRIED EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW GIVEN BY JUDGE CLARK ON IRISH TELEVISION IN THE COURSE OF WHICH HE SAID THAT HIS VISIT WAS NOT A NEW INITIATIVE BUT A REAFFIRMATION OF MR REAGAN'S EARLIER STATEMENT (OF 17 MARCH) AND 'AN EXTENSION OF FURTHER HOPE FOR RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO TRADITIONS AND CERTAINLY THE HOPE AND PRAYER OF ALL AMERICANS THAT THIS CAN ULTIMATELY LEAD TO REUNIFICATION'.

2. THIS STATEMENT IS EXTREMELY UNHELPFUL SINCE IT WILL BE TAKEN AS EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE ALLEGATIONS BEING MADE BY UNIONISTS THAT HMG'S ULTIMATE AIM IS REUNIFICATION OF IRELAND. IT SHOWS A DISCONCERTING LACK OF SENSITIVITY AND IS ALL THE MORE WORRYING GIVEN THAT CLARK GAVE NO HINT WHEN HE WAS HERE THAT HE HAD WITH HIM THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO DR FITZGERALD ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND OF WHICH WE FIRST LEARNED FROM THE PRESS.

3. ACCORDINGLY FERGUSSON TELEPHONED THE MINISTER AT THE US EMBASSY HERE THIS MORNING TO EXPRESS CONCERN AND DISMAY AT THE REPORTS, EXPLAINING THAT THEY WERE UNHELPFUL AND ASKING FOR GUIDANCE ON HOW THEY SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE SHOULD FIND HELPFUL A PUBLIC REAFFIRMATION THAT PRESIDENT REAGAN'S STATEMENT OF 17 MARCH CONTINUED TO REPRESENT US POLICY.

FERGUSSON REPEATED THE POINT MADE TO STREATOR BY EYERS ON 7 DECEMBER THAT WE FOUND IT ODD THAT WE SHOULD FIRST LEARN OF A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT REAGAN TO DR FITZGERALD ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND FROM THE PRESS.

4. STREATOR WAS UNABLE TO OFFER ANY EXPLANATION OF WHAT JUDGE CLARK HAD SAID. HE THOUGHT JUDGE CLARK MIGHT SIMPLY HAVE ADDED

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A PERSONAL VIEW TO LANGUAGE ABOUT RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO TRADITIONS DRAWN FROM THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO DR FITZGERALD.

5. GIVEN THE EFFECT ON PROTESTANT OPINION, WE SHALL CONSIDER IN THE LIGHT OF THE RESPONSE TO FERGUSSON'S REMARKS WHETHER TO COMPLAIN MORE FORMALLY. GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD MEANWHILE, UNLESS YOU SEE OBJECTION, RAISE JUDGE CLARK'S REMARK IN AN INTERROGATIVE WAY WITH THE STATE DEPARTMENT, MAKING IT CLEAR THAT WE SHOULD FIND HELPFUL A REAFFIRMATION THAT US POLICY REMAINED UNCHANGED.

6. NEWS DEPARTMENT IS TAKING THE FOLLOWING LINE:-

(A) (ON-THE-RECORD)

'WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN A COMPLETE TEXT AND CANNOT COMMENT UNTIL WE HAVE.'

(B) (UNATTRIBUTABLE WITH TRUSTED CONTACTS)

'WE ARE TAKING THIS UP WITH THE US AUTHORITIES TO ESTABLISH WHAT JUDGE CLARK SAID AND WHAT THE STATUS OF HIS REMARKS WAS - WAS WHAT HE SAID AMERICAN POLICY? HMG'S POLICY IS WELL-KNOWN: NORTHERN IRELAND IS A PART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WILL REMAIN SO UNLESS THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WISH OTHERWISE. WHATEVER MR CLARK MAY HAVE SAID ON IRISH TELEVISION, NOTHING HE SAID DURING HIS TALKS IN DUBLIN LED US TO EXPECT THAT HE WOULD SAY ANYTHING ALONG THE LINES REPORTED OR TO SUPPOSE THAT THERE WAS ANY CHANGE IN US POLICY. WE FIND THE REPORT SURPRISING.'

CARRINGTON

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