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*Thank you very much.
- a successful visit. 19*

Pauline Murrell

Dear Tim,

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VISIT TO USA: 19-21 JULY 1982

In his letter of 17 February to all Private Secretaries, Willie Rickett indicated that the Prime Minister would like to see reports from Ministers on visits overseas : Mr Prior has therefore asked me to send this account of his recent visit to the USA.

The Secretary of State visited Washington and New York between 19-21 July. The object was two-fold; to explain to American opinion-formers the thinking behind the Northern Ireland Act 1982 and to discourage the American public from contributing either financially or by moral support to the Provisional IRA. These two objectives are of course connected insofar as signs of political movement in Northern Ireland will assist moderate Irish-American leaders in their attempts to persuade Irish-Americans not to contribute to the Provisional IRA or its agents. The London bombings of 20 July gave special point to these messages.

Washington

Mr Prior's programme in Washington involved a number of media interviews, a series of meeting with members of the Congressional Friends of Ireland Group, and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, as well as the Secretary - Treasurer of the AFL/CIO. He also attended a dinner hosted by Sir Nicholas Henderson for members of Congress and senior Administration figures, including Clark and Eagleburger.

The views expressed resembled those expressed by President Reagan in his message to the Prime Minister following the London bombings. Americans were both shocked and sympathetic and Mr Prior was able to make the point forcefully that contributions to NORaid and its supporters were used to buy guns and bombs which were used to kill and main innocent people.

Conversations with Congressman and Members of the Administration naturally focused on the political initiative in Northern Ireland. Mr Prior explained the British Government's responsibility to uphold the wishes of the majority in Northern Ireland in regard to the constitutional position of the Province, and also our concern that the rights of the minority be fully safeguarded. He expressed the view that, while the proposals may not have been liked by any of the Northern Ireland

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parties, they did offer the best prospect available of promoting political activity there and that it was in the interests of all parties, especially the SDLP, to take part in October's elections.

These views were received with interest on the Hill and with warmth in the Administration. Judge Clark and Deputy Secretary of State Stoessel, on behalf of the Administration, expressed support for the initiative. There were promises of continuing strong support from the Administration for the FBI's successful efforts to stem the flow of funds and weapons to the PIRA. The Friends of Ireland and other Congressional leaders with Irish-American constituents seemed impressed; and while one would not expect them to come out openly in favour of the initiative, they should be less disposed as a result of these meetings to accept uncritically the views of the SDLP on what we are trying to achieve.

New York

The main aim in New York was to give a series of radio and television interviews pressing home the arguments about financial support for the Provisional IRA and stressing that we would not be deflected from our policy in Northern Ireland by terrorist violence. The most important interviews were:-

NBC - TV:	The Today Show (Audience approximately 6.5 million)
ABC - TV:	Good Morning America (Audience approximately 6.5 million)
Cable News Network	
National Public Radio "All Things Considered" (250 stations)	
<u>ABC Radio Network:</u>	"Michael Jackson" (Live phone-in programme in approximately 20 major cities)
<u>CBS Radio Network:</u>	"Mike Wallace at Large" (500 stations)
ABC - TV:	"Nightline" (Audience approximately 15 million)

As a result of the London bombings, there was excellent media coverage and the message will have got across to a wide spectrum of Irish-Americans and may even have an effect on some of that minority who give active support to the Provisional IRA.

Mr Prior also undertook two engagements in support of inward investment in the UK and in Northern Ireland in particular. These were a meeting with industrialists and bankers (and some resident British journalists) over drinks, and a call on American Home Products, a major US

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Corporation considering an expansion of its factory at Ballymoney in Northern Ireland.

Summary

The visit was worthwhile and, within the context of our continuing efforts to put across our view of the Northern Ireland situation in the USA, achieved more than we had initially hoped for. This was in part due to the coincidence of the London bombings of 20 July which heightened interests in Northern Ireland affairs in the USA and produced a spate of condemnations of the Provisional IRA in the American media and from political figures.

.... I attach copies of the reporting telegrams from Washington and New York.

The Secretary of State wishes to express his particular gratitude to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to the Ambassador, and to the staffs of the posts involved, for the hard work which they put in to make the visit a success.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Private Secretary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to HM Ambassador in Washington.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins

M W HOPKINS

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