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Prime Minister

VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES  
24 MARCH - 2 APRIL

In Washington and the four other cities which I visited it was possible to talk on Northern Ireland to a substantial number of Senators, Congressmen, Editorial staffs and TV and radio commentators. On the whole, and with one proviso, the impression I got was reassuring. The level of general public interest in Irish matters is low. Most Irish-American leaders, of whom Speaker O'Neill is the most prestigious, understand that we are making a constructive effort in Northern Ireland and are for the moment content to await the outcome. In Los Angeles I sampled the rooted hostility of Noraid supporters and their efforts to make capital out of human rights issues. But the great majority of those with whom I spoke saw clearly and condemned what Noraid are up to. In Washington at the start of the visit Congressmen advised me to stress Libya's public support for PIRA and I found this good advice. There is a telling quotation from a recent article in the Jana Report (the organ of the Official Libyan News Agency) on 19 February which spoke of the duty of the Libyan people to adopt the IRA, and to ensure that they are trained and armed.

2. My proviso is that too much weight is being placed on the present Anglo-Irish discussions. Everyone, even on the West Coast, had heard of the Mail on Sunday story of an imminent breakthrough. As you know, despite their own recent experiences, Americans continue to believe that most problems can be solved quickly if only the right amount of energy and good will is available. They listened patiently to my explanations about the limits of the Anglo-Irish talks and the need for parallel progress on security, internal reconciliation and jobs. But there is a widespread belief that an agreement is in reach by which you and Dr FitzGerald could solve the Irish problem, and that the

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island could then be blessed with substantial American aid. This is of course dangerous. Any Anglo-Irish agreement will be more modest in scope than Americans generally suppose; yet if we do not reach agreement the disappointment will rise to a damaging level. It would be vital that our own efforts should be fully understood and explained at that time. I think it is important therefore that HM Ambassador should be kept fully informed of the state of play.

3. My talks with the FBI, the National Security Council and the State Department show that the Administration itself is solidly co-operative on security. If we can complete the new extradition agreement it should be a real help.

4. I am sending copies of this minute to all members of OD(I) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

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3 April 1985

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