

BRUFO 004/30

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FM BRUSSELS 300915Z MAY 85

TO FLASH FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 152 OF 30 MAY 85

INFO IMMEDIATE ROME UKREP BRUSSELS

*J. Jackson*

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PS / PUS  
Chief Clerk  
W. P. ...  
W. Jenkins

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Cass ...  
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MY TELNO 150: FOOTBALL: LIVERPOOL V JUVENTUS

*no 10 DS*

1. THE BRITISH POLICE AND FOOTBALL AUTHORITIES WILL NO DOUBT BE DRAWING UP AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ADEQUACY OF BELGIAN MEASURES TO MAINTAIN ORDER. THEY WERE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE BELGIAN ORGANISERS AND POLICE BEFORE AND DURING THE MATCH AND TO OUR KNOWLEDGE HAD NOT EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH BELGIAN PREPARATIONS (SEE MY TELNO 146) HOWEVER OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT, SHARED BY MANY BELGIANS AND ITALIANS PRESENT, IS THAT IN THE EVENTS THERE WERE DEFICIENCIES. SUPPORTERS ENTERING THE STADIUM WERE NOT SEARCHED FOR POTENTIAL MISSILES, STEWARDS SEEMED ILL-TRAINED AND ABOVE ALL THERE WERE INSUFFICIENT POLICE IN THE STADIUM SEPARATING LIVERPOOL AND JUVENTUS SUPPORTERS. THE TERRACES AT ONE END WERE RESERVED FOR JUVENTUS BUT AT THE OTHER END RIVAL SUPPORTERS WERE SEPARATED ON THE TERRACE BY A RELATIVELY FRAGILE BARRIER. WHEN THE SERIOUS DISTURBANCE BEGAN POLICE SEEMED CONFUSED AND UNCERTAIN WHAT ACTION TO TAKE.
2. THE BELGIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE CLEARLY BEEN STUNG BY CRITICISMS ON THESE POINTS, ESPECIALLY FROM SOME ITALIAN SUPPORTERS, AND ARE DOING ALL THEY CAN TO DEMONSTRATE THAT REASONABLE PRECAUTIONS WERE TAKEN AND THAT THE VIOLENCE OF THE BRITISH SUPPORTERS SO LONG BEFORE EVEN THE START OF THE MATCH COULD NOT REASONABLY HAVE BEEN PREDICTED. THE BELGIAN MEDIA, WHILE EMPHASIZING THE GENERAL FEELING OF HORROR AT THE TRAGEDY AND INDIGNATION AT THE BEHAVIOUR OF SOME BRITISH SUPPORTERS, HAVE GIVEN CONSIDERABLE COVERAGE TO CRITICISMS BEING MADE OF THE ORGANISATION OF THE MATCH AND THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS.
3. IN VIEW OF THE VERY CLOSE CONSULTATIONS WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN THE RELEVANT BRITISH AND BELGIAN AUTHORITIES, AND THE GRAVITY OF THE TRAGEDY WHICH OCCURRED, ANY BRITISH OFFICIAL CRITICISM OF BELGIAN PRECAUTIONS WOULD OF COURSE BE STRONGLY RESENTED.

JACKSON: