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FM BRUSSELS 311030Z MAY 85
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 159 OF 31 MAY 85
INFO PRIORITY ROME

FOOTBALL: LIVERPOOL V JUVENTUS

1. THE FOLLOWING IS A FURTHER ASSESSMENT, AS REQUESTED BY CONSULAR DEPARTMENT, OF MEASURES TAKEN BEFORE THE MATCH TO PREPARE FOR POSSIBLE VIOLENCE

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING PRACTICE THE EMBASSY ENSURED THAT THERE WAS CLOSE LIAISON BETWEEN THE BELGIAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION, THE LIVERPOOL FC AND THE BELGIAN AND BRITISH POLICE (DETAILS IN MY TELNOS DISTRESS 15 AND 156). THE LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB SECRETARY (ROBINSON) ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH THE BELGIAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION AS SOON AS LIVERPOOL QUALIFIED FOR THE FINAL. AMONG OTHER STEPS TAKEN IN PREPARING FOR THE MATCH, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BRUSSELS POLICE PAID A VISIT TO LIVERPOOL. THEY TOLD US THAT THIS HAD GONE WELL AND THAT SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS, INCLUDING WARNING PUBLICITY ISSUED TO FANS, WERE BEING MADE. MESSAGES FROM MR MACFARLANE TO THE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR SPORT EMPHASISED THE NEED TO PREPARE FOR POSSIBLE VIOLENCE.

3. BELGIAN CONFIDENCE THAT MEASURES WERE ADEQUATE WAS NO DOUBT ENCOURAGED BY THEIR RELATIVE SUCCESS IN CONTROLLING VIOLENCE AT EARLIER MATCHES (CF OUR TELNOS DISTRESS 11 AND GOVERNMENT COMMENTS REPORTED IN OUR TELNOS 151 AND 156) BUT THERE WAS ALREADY MOUNTING RESENTMENT, ESPECIALLY AMONG LOCAL AUTHORITIES, AT THE HIGH AND RISING COST OF POLICING MATCHES INVOLVING BRITISH SUPPORTERS. THERE WAS CLEARLY A LIMIT TO HOW FAR THE BELGIANS WERE PREPARED TO BE PUSHED IN INCURRING ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE.

4. SOME BRITISH FOOTBALL OFFICIALS AND JOURNALISTS ARE NOW MAKING SWEEPING CRITICISMS OF THE STATE OF THE STADIUM AND OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS VIZ WEAK PHYSICAL INSTALLATIONS, THE SALE OF DRINK OUTSIDE THE STADIUM, INSUFFICIENT POLICE DEPLOYMENT AND ABOVE ALL FAILURE TO SEPARATE RIVAL SUPPORTERS AND TO PREVENT THE STAND AREA SUPPOSEDLY ALLOCATED TO BELGIAN SUPPORTERS FROM BEING LARGELY OCCUPIED BY ITALIANS, EITHER THROUGH THE RESALE OF TICKETS SOLD IN BELGIUM OR THROUGH COUNTERFEIT TICKETS SOLD IN ITALY. (THE GENDARMERIE HAD DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNTERFEIT TICKETS BUT PLANS TO REPLACE THEM WITH GENUINE TICKETS FOR OTHER PARTS OF THE STADIUM SEEM NOT TO HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE).

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5. A SPECIAL BELGIAN FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO THE WEAKNESS OF ORGANISATION WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE COMPLEX DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES (MY TELNO 157) . RESPONSIBILITY FOR SPORT HAS BEEN DEVOLVED FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TO THE REGIONS (IE FLEMISH AND FRENCH COMMUNITY EXECUTIVES) BUT RESPONSIBILITY FOR PUBLIC ORDER AT SPORTING EVENTS LIES PARTLY WITH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT (GENDARMERIE) AND PARTLY WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES (POLICE). LIAISON IS NOT ALWAYS GOOD. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLICE RATHER THAN THE GENDARMERIE VISITED LIVERPOOL, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS PRIMARILY GENDARMES WHO IN THE EVENT WERE DEPLOYED TO CONTROL THE BLOCKS ALLOCATED TO LIVERPOOL SUPPORTERS.

6. SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY WHO WERE AT THE MATCH, AND OTHERS WHOM WE HAVE CONSULTED, WITNESSED NUMEROUS INCIDENTS OF UNRULY BEHAVIOUR BY JUVENTUS AS WELL AS LIVERPOOL FANS AND CONFIRMED THAT POLICE ACTION WAS IN MANY INSTANCES SLOW AND ILL-COORDINATED.

7. THERE IS ALSO A LOT OF BELGIAN CRITICISM OF SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS (MY TELNOS 150 AND 156) . IN A BELGIAN TELEVISION PANEL DISCUSSION LAST NIGHT IN WHICH I PARTICIPATED TOGETHER WITH THE INTERIOR MINISTER, THE CHIEF OF THE GENDARMERIE AND MAYOR OF BRUSSELS AMONG OTHERS, QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC WERE PREDOMINANTLY CRITICAL OF THE BELGIAN AUTHORITIES. NOTHOMB WAS REPEATEDLY PRESSED OVER THE CLEAR FAILURE TO SEPARATE RIVAL SUPPORTERS. HE DEFENDED THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS AS IN PREVIOUS INTERVIEWS (MY TELNO 156) . THE ESSENCE OF HIS ARGUMENT WAS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD A DUTY TO THE CITIZENS OF BELGIUM AND TO PEACEFUL VISITORS. IT WAS NOT PREPARED TO DEVOTE UNREASONABLY LARGE RESOURCES TO MEET THE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS OF BRITISH HOOLIGANS, AT THE EXPENSE OF MORE DESERVING CAUSES. HE WAS NOT WILLING TO TURN BELGIUM, EVEN FOR AN AFTERNOON , INTO A POLICE STATE, WITH MASSIVE POLICE DEPLOYMENTS, SPECIAL CONTROLS, IDENTITY CHECKS ETC. THE MAYOR ALSO STRESSED THE ABSENCE OF ANY LEGAL BASIS FOR OTHER SUGGESTED MEASURES , EG THE CLOSING OF BARS IN VARIOUS AREAS OF THE CITY.

8. IN BELGIUM WE HAVE DETECTED NO HINT OF CRITICISM OF NOTHOMB'S PROPOSAL FOR A TEMPORARY BAN ON SPORTING EVENTS INVOLVING BRITISH TEAMS (THIS IS BEING CONSIDERED BY THE BELGIAN COUNCIL OF MINISTERS THIS MORNING AND WILL PROBABLY BE APPROVED).

ON THIS POINT HIS CRITICS MERELY ARGUE THAT HE SHOULD HAVE ACTED EARLIER.

JACKSON

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