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ANNUAL STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

1. CONGRESS HAS JUST PUBLISHED THE REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH THE STATE DEPARTMENT ARE REQUIRED BY LAW TO SUBMIT EACH YEAR. THE REPORT COVERS ALL MEMBER STATES OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND DOES NOT DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY IN TONE OR CONTENT FROM REPORTS SUBMITTED UNDER THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. THERE IS, HOWEVER, SLIGHTLY LESS EMPHASIS THAN BEFORE ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MATTERS AND INCREASED STRESS ON ABUSES IN THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES. THE REPORT BENDS OVER BACKWARDS TO GIVE AMERICA'S FRIENDS THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT, NOTING A DOWNWARD TREND IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SAN SALVADOR IN 1981; SOME MODIFICATION OF APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA AND MERELY REFERRING TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE COMPLEX HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ISRAELI-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

2. AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, THE CHAPTER ON THE UNITED KINGDOM CONCENTRATES HEAVILY ON NORTHERN IRELAND WITH A GOOD DEAL OF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON THE EUROPEAN COURT CASE, THE BENNETT REPORT ETC. THE REPORT CONTAINS A HELPFUL STATISTICAL TABLE SHOWING THE DOWNWARD TREND IN COMPLAINTS OF MISTREATMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

3. IN REPORTING THE 1980 AND 1981 HUNGER STRIKES THE STATE DEPARTMENT DESCRIBE VERY FULLY THE FINDINGS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, OPPOSITION BY THE CHURCHES TO THE FIRST HUNGER STRIKE AND HMG'S WILLINGNESS TO LIBERALISE PRISON RULES, WHILE REFUSING TO ACCEDE TO THE FULL DEMANDS DURING THE SECOND STRIKE. THE ONLY UNHELPFUL REFERENCES ON NORTHERN IRELAND ARE:

(A) THE STATEMENT IN A PASSAGE ON DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL THAT IN DIPLOCK COURTS "THE NORMAL RULES OF EVIDENCE HAVE BEEN ALTERED TO ALLOW FOR THE ADMISSIBILITY OF STATEMENTS MADE BY THE ACCUSED WHILE IN CUSTODY" THOUGH THE REPORT ADDS A PROVISIO ABOUT THE USE OF STATEMENTS MADE AS A RESULT OF TORTURE ETC.

(B) A LENGTHY PASSAGE, IMPLICITLY CRITICAL ABOUT THE POWERS GRANTED TO THE HOME SECRETARY AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND TO MAKE EXCLUSION ORDERS. THE REPORT NOTES THAT THIS POWER HAS BEEN REFERRED TO BY MANY AS A SYSTEM OF INTERNAL EXILE.

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4. IN DEALING WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM AS A WHOLE THE REPORT REFERS TO LAST YEAR'S URBAN RIOTS AND DRAWS ATTENTION TO POLICING METHODS AND POLICE RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND MINORITIES AS A PARTICULAR AREA OF TENSION AND CONTROVERSY. TURNING TO THE ECONOMY, THE REPORT NOTES THAT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ELIMINATE THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DISADVANTAGES SUFFERED BY MEMBERS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES. IT REFERS TO SPECIAL EFFORTS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE TO SUBSIDISE THE NORTHERN IRELAND ECONOMY BUT NOTES THAT THE BURDEN OF UNEMPLOYMENT FALLS DISPROPORTIONATELY ON THE CATHOLIC POPULATION ALTHOUGH IT ADDS THAT THE REASONS FOR THIS ARE COMPLEX AND ARE NOT EXPLAINED SOLELY ON THE GROUNDS OF RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION. THE REPORT NOTES THAT THE BRITISH TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IS ONE OF THE MOST ACTIVE IN THE WORLD AND THAT THE RIGHT TO STRIKE IS VIRTUALLY UNRESTRICTED.

5. THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S FINDINGS ON THE UK HAVE ATTRACTED NO PUBLICITY. INsofar AS THIS YEAR'S ENTRY ON THE UK DIFFERS FROM LAST YEAR'S IT DOES SO MAINLY AS A RESULT OF EVENTS (LIKE THE HUNGER STRIKE IN NORTHERN IRELAND) OR THE INJUNCTION GIVEN TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT DRAFTERS NOT TO REPRODUCE LAST YEAR'S REPORT UNCHANGED. IN GENERAL, THE REPORT GIVES A FAVOURABLE ACCOUNT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM WHOSE LEGAL TRADITION AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ARE, IT SAYS, WIDELY AND JUSTIFIABLY ADMIRER.

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