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cc 4

Prime Minister  
CDP  
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PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND : OVERSEAS INFORMATION EFFORT

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in P113 (att.)

I last minuted you about our work to explain Northern Ireland policies overseas in April 1983. Douglas Hurd has asked me to let you have a brief report on the present position.

2. Our main information effort has been concentrated on the United States. Over the past two years there has been a major shift for the better in American attitudes towards Northern Ireland. In general people of the United States are taking a much more informed attitude to Northern Ireland affairs: they recognise the need to stop help going to terrorists and are sympathetic to the talks we are having with the Irish Government. Only a conspicuous failure in these talks is likely to set back the progress which has been made.

3. A turning point in the presentation of our policy in the USA was your own visit in February this year. The references to Northern Ireland in your speech to Congress were very well received and reached a wide audience. Our efforts have also been helped by the attitude of the Administration. The President made helpful St Patrick's Day statements this year and last, and the Friends of Ireland have helped to ensure a generally responsible attitude from the Irish lobby in Congress. Helped by their own experiences, the Americans now undoubtedly have a better understanding of the international threat posed by terrorism. We have also been helped by the Irish Republic's clear statement of its opposition to terrorist violence. You will recall how effectively you were able to deploy this in your speech to Congress.

4. There has been a steady stream of visitors to and from Northern Ireland to back up these messages. Douglas made an intensive visit at the end of March, Chris Patten attended an important conference in

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/Virginia



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Virginia in January and Rhodes Boyson is planning a trip to the States in September. To ensure that the views of nationalist politicians like John Hume were balanced by the Unionist position, we arranged two visits for Harold McCusker. In May this year a US delegation of senior information policy officials spent two very successful days in Northern Ireland.

5. Douglas and I have given high priority to the briefing of London based journalists and diplomats and we continue to encourage as many as possible to visit Northern Ireland. The South African Ambassador and a senior Australian diplomat paid useful visits in the last few months and Douglas has had a number of meetings with senior foreign diplomats in London, including the American Ambassador. Regular briefing at lesser levels has continued.

6. There have been three main issues on which we have concentrated in the last two years. The first is combatting American financial aid for terrorism. Although there has been a growing awareness of NORIAD's links with the Provisional IRA, there remains a small but active minority who will not be persuaded either by reason or by information. The death last August in Northern Ireland, of one person killed by a baton round during the disturbances that followed the appearance at a Sinn Fein rally of NORIAD's director of publicity, Martin Galvin, did us some harm presentationally in the United States. Nevertheless, responsible American newspapers and broadcasting networks support our stand on terrorism and it is only in the Irish ethnic press and maverick newspapers such as the Philadelphia Daily News that our security policy is regularly criticised.

7. The second main issue is on the political front, where we have had to contend with exaggerated expectations following the New Ireland Forum Report. There is now greater understanding of the complexities and in Government circles at least, a more realistic level of expectation. But we shall need to be ready to present our position very positively following the conclusion of the talks with the Irish Government whatever their outcome.

8. The third issue concerns fair employment policies. The extremist Irish National Caucus has been vigorously promoting the so-called

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McBride principles which would put unfair and possibly unlawful burdens on American companies in Northern Ireland in relation to their employment practices. Those companies who do not comply have been threatened by the withdrawal of major investments, such as those by the City of New York Pension Funds. These efforts have been backed by the introduction of legislation in some states calling on American companies to accept the principles. We have lobbied strenuously against the campaign. We must limit its potential to damage investment in Northern Ireland. We will therefore continue to give high priority to our work to frustrate this campaign.

9. We shall need to continue to work closely with the Foreign Office over the next few months in the presentation of our policies on Northern Ireland. We shall together take every opportunity in the United States to drum in the message about terrorism, and we will continue to try to thwart the potential damage to Northern Ireland's economy posed by the McBride principles. But our work will be substantially influenced by our relations with the Irish Republic. We will be ready to build on any agreement without encouraging unfounded euphoria; at the same time we should not underestimate the very real difficulties we will have in presenting our policies in the United States if those talks should be seen to fail.

10. I am copying this minute to Willie Whitelaw, Geoffrey Howe, Douglas Hurd and John Wakeham.

*N.S.*

NICHOLAS SCOTT

29 July 1985

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