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FM DUBLIN 151215Z MAR 85
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 140 OF 15 MARCH 1985

PERSONAL FOR CLARK, RID

FCO TELNO 54: ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

1. AS WE AGREED I SHOWED THE TEXT OF THIS TELEGRAM TO LILLIS ON 14 MARCH. HE SAID THAT DORR'S ACCOUNT OF THE CONVERSATION WAS SIMILAR. WE AGREED THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT THEME OF THE MINISTERIAL DISCUSSIONS ON 22 MARCH WOULD BE THE POLITICAL LIMITATIONS ON THEIR CAPACITY FOR MANOEUVRE. I SAID I THOUGHT THAT OUR SIDE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED TO HEAR AN ASSESSMENT FROM THE IRISH SIDE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR THEM OF AMENDING THE IRISH CONSTITUTION OR RECOGNISING THE PRESENT STATUS OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN SOME OTHER POSITIVE WAY. LILLIS SAID THAT ONE OF THE DIFFICULTIES ABOUT THIS WAS THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE ABLE TO ASSERT THAT ANY MOVE IN THIS FIELD WAS SPONTANEOUS AND THAT THEY WERE NOT ABANDONING IRISH CLAIMS AS PART OF A BARGAIN MADE WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. WE AGREED THAT THIS THOUGHT TOOK US STRAIGHT BACK TO THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO ENSURE THAT ANY AGREEMENT BETWEEN US WAS COMMENDED TO OUR ELECTORATES IN TERMS WHICH CAUSED NO DIFFICULTY FOR THE OTHER SIDE.

2. THIS BROUGHT LILLIS TO REFER AGAIN TO IRISH CONCERN ABOUT SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND HAS BEEN SAYING IN PUBLIC. HE SAID THEY WELL UNDERSTOOD HIS WISH TO SOFTEN UP PUBLIC OPINION IN THE NORTH. BUT ALTHOUGH MR BARRY WAS GRATEFUL FOR MR HURD'S MESSAGE (FCO TELNO 51) THIS WAS CERTAINLY A TOPIC HE WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS FURTHER WITH BRITISH MINISTERS NEXT WEEK. LILLIS SAID THAT WE MIGHT CONSIDER A MORE SYSTEMATIC EXCHANGE OF ADVANCE TEXTS OF MINISTERIAL SPEECHES, THOUGH NOTHING COULD BE DONE ABOUT STATEMENTS AT PRESS CONFERENCES.

GOODISON

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