

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



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E-A DUBLIN
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SERIAL NO 453
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TO HQ
FOR BRADY

FROM LONDON
FROM HENNESSY

(PLEASE COPY MS HENNESSY)

AS REPORTED ORALLY TO MS HENNESSY THE PRIME MINISTER ANSWERED TWO QUESTIONS ON ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS PUT TO HER (BY RTE JOURNALIST) AT THIS MORNING'S CONSERVATIVE PARTY PRESS CONFERENCE. IN RESPONSE TO A GENERAL QUESTION ON THE STATE OF RELATIONS SHE SAID (QUOTATIONS APPROXIMATE ONLY) "WE CO-OPERATE VERY MUCH IN DEFENSE AND ECONOMIC POLICY AREAS ACROSS THE BORDER. WE BELIEVE IN MAINTAINING VERY FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE ONLY COUNTRY WITH WHICH WE HAVE A LAND FRONTIER". A SUBSEQUENT QUESTION ON THE IMPACT OF THE FALKLANDS DISAGREEMENT ELICITED THE FOLLOWING COMMENT: "THERE HAVE NOT BEEN SPECIFIC BILATERAL TALKS OF THE KIND WHICH WE HAD BEFORE. WE THOUGHT IT BETTER TO WAIT A BIT. I OF COURSE SEE GARRET FITZGERALD AT EUROPEAN COUNCILS." MR DEMPSEY WAS PRESENT AT CENTRAL OFFICE AND DREW THE ATTENTION OF SENIOR OFFICIALS THERE TO THE UNUSUAL USE OF THE WORD "DEFENSE". HE WAS ASSURED THAT "SECURITY" WAS WHAT WAS IN MIND AND THAT THIS WOULD BE MADE CLEAR IF THE MATTER WAS RAISED BY THE MEDIA.

I SUBSEQUENTLY SPOKE WITH THE IRISH PRESS CORRESPONDENT AIDAN HENNIGAN WHO WAS ALSO AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE (DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS ARE AT A DISADVANTAGE IN THAT OWING TO PRESSURE OF SPACE THEY ARE RESTRICTED TO AN UP-STAIRS ROOM WHERE THE PROCEEDINGS ARE RELAYED BY INTERCOM. BECAUSE THERE ARE NO ROVING MICROPHONES IN THE AUDITORIUM DURING QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS THE RESPONSES OF THE PLATFORM SPEAKERS ONLY ARE PICKED UP). HENNIGAN - WHO DID NOT SEEM TO FOCUS ON THE DEFENSE/SECURITY DISTINCTION - SAID THAT HE WAS STRUCK BY THE RELATIVELY FRIENDLY TONE ADOPTED BY THATCHER IN DEALING WITH THESE QUESTIONS WHICH HE SAID WAS IN CONTRADICTION TO HER MORE BRISK APPROACH WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE NORTH AT THE OPENING PRESS CONFERENCE (TX 435). HE INTENDS TO WRITE A PIECE FOR TOMORROW'S N I. PRESS ON THESE LINES AND DRAWING THE CONCLUSION THAT THERE MAY AFTER ALL BE SCOPE FOR CLOSER COOPERATION POST ELECTION.

HE ALSO REPORTED A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH A CLOSE FOOT AIDE WHO ENQUIRED ABOUT PROGRESS ON THE FORUM AND ITS LIKELY PROSPECTS. ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE FOOT HAD EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN ITS ESTABLISHMENT. I LET HIM KNOW THAT WE WOULD BE MAKING A POINT OF KEEPING ALL THE PARTY LEADERS FULLY BRIEFED ON THE DEVELOPMENTS IN REGARD TO THE FORUM.

END

25.5.83
TIME: 1500

E-A DUBLIN
F-A1 LDN

M. Hennessy
Open to do put on
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