

Ireland



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TELEGRAM NUMBER 4993 OF 22 DECEMBER 80.

INFO NIO BELFAST, NIO LONDON, BIS NEW YORK AND DUBLIN.

INFO SAVING BOSTON, CHICAGO, SAN FRANCISCO AND LOS ANGELES.

NORTHERN IRELAND : AMERICAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE END OF THE HUNGER STRIKE.

1. THE END OF THE STRIKE ON 18 DECEMBER WAS PROMINENTLY REPORTED IN THE MAIN NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO AND T.V. NETWORKS. HEADLINING THE EVENT AS A "VICTORY FOR MRS. THATCHER", THE NEW YORK TIMES SAID THE DECISION TO CALL OFF THE STRIKE WAS A CLEAR VICTORY FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

THE TELEVISION AND RADIO NETWORKS HIGHLIGHTED THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS EARLIER IN THE DAY "MURDER IS NOT POLITICAL, MURDER IS MURDER".

THE WASHINGTON POST REPORTED THAT THE STRIKE WAS CALLED OFF WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS HAVING BEEN WRUNG OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT.

2. EDITORIALS STRUCK A MORE QUALIFIED NOTE. NEW YORK TIMES (20 DECEMBER) SAID THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WON NOT A VICTORY BUT A REPRIEVE (TEXT BY BAG). DESPITE THEIR CRIMES THE STRIKERS WERE SEEN AS SYMBOLIC VICTIMS OF A SYSTEM OF JUSTICE THAT IS INCREASINGLY AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE BRITISH. THE EDITORIAL CRITICISED INTERROGATION METHODS, DIPLOCK COURTS, NON JURY TRIALS, AND CONVICTIONS ON THE BASIS OF CONFESSIONS. NOW THAT THE BRITISH HAVE MADE THEIR POINT ABOUT RESISTING TERRORISM, SAID THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE "LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES" THAT LED TO THE HUNGER STRIKE MUST BE ADDRESSED.

3. WASHINGTON STAR (21 DECEMBER), WELCOMING THE END OF THE STRIKE WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT GOVERNMENT CONCESSIONS, ALSO CALLED FOR THE DISPUTE ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF IRA PRISONERS NOW TO BE PUT ASIDE IN THE INTEREST OF ADVANCING AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT OF "ULSTER'S POLITICAL MESS". TERRORISTS IN OR OUT OF PRISON ARE A PART OF THE PROBLEM, SAID THE WASHINGTON STAR, AND DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOLUTION.

4. NEW YORK DAILY NEWS (22 DECEMBER), WHILE APPLAUDING THE GOVERNMENT'S STAND, EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS WOULD INTENSIFY THEIR CO-OPERATION.

5. WIRE AGENCIES ARE CARRYING PIRA CLAIMS OF VICTORY, E.G. GERRY ADAMS, AND LOCAL PIRA SYMPATHISERS ARE VIGOROUSLY PEDDLING THIS LINE.

/6. PRIOR

6. PRIOR TO THE END OF THE HUNGER STRIKE, TREATMENT OF IT IN MAJOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING NETWORKS HAD BEEN GENERALLY POSITIVE. MOST EDITORIALS IN THE EAST COAST PRESS (TEXTS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED) APPLAUDED THE DECISION NOT TO YIELD ON THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL STATUS. IN A MUDDLED EDITORIAL, THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, BY CONTRAST, SAID HMG SHOULD NOT YIELD TO TERRORISM BUT SHOULD FREE THE SEVEN HUNGER STRIKERS AS A GESTURE. REPORTING OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO DUBLIN AUGMENTED THE FAVOURABLE COVERAGE, MUCH OF THE PRESS READING INTO THE SUMMIT A DISPOSITION TO SEARCH FOR NEW WAYS OF ACCOMMODATION ON NORTHERN IRELAND.

7. IN CONTRAST TO THE MAJOR METROPOLITAN AND NATIONAL NETWORK MEDIA, HOWEVER, COVERAGE IN THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL MEDIA, WHICH ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS AND NORAID PROPAGANDA, WAS MORE FRAGMENTARY AND LESS POSITIVE. FORMER MAZE PRISONERS AND SYMPATHISERS SUCH AS FATHERS FAUL AND MURRAY PROMOTED HOSTILE AND DISTORTED ACCOUNTS OF THE MAZE PRISON ISSUE.

8. THUS WHILE THE DOMINANT THEMES OF AMERICAN REPORTING AND COMMENT, PARTICULARLY IN THE INFLUENTIAL MAJOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING OUTLETS, AMOUNT TO A CLEAR PROPAGANDA SETBACK FOR PIRA, THERE IS COMFORT FOR THEM IN THE COVERAGE OF NORTHERN IRELAND BY NUMEROUS MINOR PAPERS AND RADIO AND T.V. STATIONS THROUGHOUT THE U.S., AND THEIR SYMPATHISERS HERE CAN BE EXPECTED TO PERSIST IN THEIR GRASS-ROOTS CAMPAIGN.

HENDERSON

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[NOT ADVANCED]