

Aut 5/10
1. PSF Mr. Rell
I have no obs. on this
2. Miss J... 8/10
3. Mr. Coste

Mr. Gee

*Mr. Oliver's
Ocean accounts with
cashier books, you
are opening a
register file.*

- c.c. Mr. Hannigan
- Mr. Marshall (L)
- Mr. Davenport
- Mr. Gilliland
- Mr. Palmer
- Mr. Clift

REPUBLICAN MONUMENT IN CROSSMAGLEN 9/9/79

In his minute of 20 September to the Secretary of State's Private Secretary Mr. Bloomfield asked for NIO advice and political and security implications of the various options that the Government might take in relation to the Republican monument at Crossmaglen. The Secretary of State has now asked for Mr. Goodhart's early advice.

2. This is one of those minor controversial issues in which Government has no real hope of avoiding political criticism whatever action it takes.
3. The monument is clearly designed to be something of a challenge. It is large, bronze, prominently sited and its inscription is hardly designed to take account of Loyalist susceptibilities. It is an expensive act of commemoration and provocation and will probably serve as the future focus for PSF demonstrations in Crossmaglen. PSF are undoubtedly watching closely for the Government's response. The committee that commissioned the monument has PSF sympathisers if not actual members on it, and you will be aware that An Phoblacht/Republican News on 22 September indicated that the official unveiling ceremony had yet to come - it is scheduled for a few weeks time.
4. The Unionist side has reacted predictably. Pressure for the monument's removal comes primarily from Harold McCusker MP who has written to the Minister saying that the monument is both offensive in its dedication and in breach of planning approval. Lisburn Borough Council have also formally demanded its removal.
5. Both sides are therefore waiting to exploit the Government's decision to their own advantage. The best course would seem to me to be one which removes the issue from the political arena at an early stage, which ensures that the Government takes as little political flak as possible.

6. The options presented are:

(a) To ignore the incident altogether: This is my preferred option, if we can convince ourselves as Mr. Palmer has suggested in his minute of 3 October that the monument is within the bounds of the original planning decision. The disadvantage is that the DOE have already publicly said that the statue is illegal, but if legal advice is that there is

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an argument for allowing the statue to remain, then I think that the Minister should be advised to take a strong line with Mr. McCusker. Mr. McCusker may dissent but it is unlikely that the polemic would last long. Local attitudes are that this is a "nine day wonder". People like Sean McEvoy, the SDLP chairman of Newry & Mourne District Council, Paddy O'Hagan, the town clerk and Seamus Mallon have all indicated that the matter is best left alone.

(b) Enforcement: To go straight to enforcement would, in my view, be the most provocative action by Government. The actual removal of the statue would be difficult to achieve and I understand that the Army and the Police have pointed out some of the difficulties in this course of action. Undoubtedly PSF would use the occasion as a propaganda weapon and possibly organise demonstrations in an area that has always been traditionally hostile to the civil authorities. It would also, as Sean McEvoy and Seamus Mallon have pointed out, force local people (and Newry & Mourne district councillors) to take sides on the issues, where so far they have not paid it any particular attention. Indeed the complaints have emanated from Unionist politicians (and councils) not involved in the area and the matter was not raised when Mr. Goodhart met the council on his recent visit to Newry. Enforcement would result in protracted public criticism with a severe risk of failure to remove the monument.

(c) To seek a planning application: If Ministers felt that Government had to be seen to be taking some action, this would seem to me to be the best option. There is a possibility that the memorial committee would be prepared to submit a formal application for planning permission if they were assured that planning permission would be authorised. There is a risk - and given the nature of the committee, it is a very real risk - that the committee would refuse to do this despite the Government's assurance. Government would then be forced into enforcement action with all the unfortunate implications involved in that.

7. My own view therefore is that the Minister should allow the statue to stand, on the basis that it is not far outwith the existing planning permission. It is unlikely that any GB action would be taken under planning legislation against contentious monuments on solely political grounds, as in this case. Firm action against this monument would undoubtedly lead to retaliatory action against Loyalist monuments - for example the many paintings of King Billy which exist on gable ends (none of which I suspect have planning approval). - my own ?

E. R.

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8. Mr. Davenport has ^{now} secured the views of the RUC and Army and will be minuting you so that a joint NIO submission can go forward to Mr. Bloomfield.

A. E. Huckle

A.E. HUCKLE
Division 3(B)
4 October 1979
3B/19523/MR

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