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FROM: S A MARSH, PAB  
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Mr Alston - B

cc Mr Bell - B  
Mr Hamilton *MA*  
Mrs Black - B *1/10*

POLICIES AND MESSAGES LIKELY TO HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE NATIONALIST WORKING CLASS

I attach a paper for ISG(M). It has had the benefit of comments from Mr Hamilton and Mr Bell. The annex has also been cleared by PPRU.

[Signed]

S A MARSH  
Political Affairs Division  
Ext 2232 SH

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POICIES AND MESSAGES LIKELY TO HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE NATIONALIST WORKING CLASS

There are a number of policies and messages which the Government could deploy in order to maximise confidence in public institutions among the nationalist working class and to minimise any tendency for the people concerned to lend assistance to the paramilitaries and vote Sinn Fein. It should be remembered that a distinction can be drawn between the working class in urban and in rural areas. In the former, the motivating factor may well be material deprivation, coupled with an alienation from society in general, which finds expression in militant republicanism often because it is the only political outlet available. In the more rural areas this general alienation is unlikely to be so high, and the driving force is more likely to be genuine republicanism, often fostered by generations of tradition. Hard information on this is not plentiful, but a summary of what is currently available is at Annex A.

2. The existence of a Protestant working class should also be remembered. It is less likely to be anti-HMG as such, but pockets of extreme deprivation do occur and undue emphasis on redressing the balance from the nationalists' point of view could have repercussions on the Protestant side.

Policies

3. The prime overall need, applicable to all categories in the target area, is to achieve increased confidence in public institutions. To a certain extent this can be done by means of rhetoric, but the main necessity is to give people a sense of belonging by demonstrating that Government can work in their interests and that the experience they have of Departments and agencies is generally a fruitful one. There will also remain a need for effective security policies to deter, and bring to justice, what we hope will be an increasingly isolated hard core of militant republicans. All this argues in favour of positive action on the interface between Government and the community. Specific areas are as follows:-

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- (i) continuation, and enhancement where appropriate, of the initiatives in Belfast (including MBW and the Belfast Action Teams), Londonderry, and the rural areas which will, inter alia, target the nationalist communities;
- (ii) extension of these ideas to other areas of need in the Province;
- (iii) a programme of announcing specific initiatives in deprived areas, particularly West of the Bann, in consultation with the International Fund;
- (iv) in areas where Sinn Fein is strong, the encouragement and fostering of "neutral" community facilities, for example advice centres where people can take their problems and have them dealt with;
- (v) vigorous pursuit of existing anti-discrimination policies, together with policies to target social need and reduce community differentials;
- (vi) the encouragement (moral, practical and financial) of local enterprise groups and initiatives which give people a stake in society;
- (vii) Continuing the firm prosecution by the police, supported where still necessary by the Armed Forces, of security policies designed to reassure all sections of the community, deter terrorists, and to bring them to justice through the courts;
- (viii) The pursuit of measures likely to win and retain the confidence of the nationalist community, by demonstrating the impartiality, integrity and professionalism (including their sensitivity to nationalist concerns), of the security forces, as well as their operational effectiveness against terrorism.

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Messages

4. Each of the policies listed above will carry with it its own message; and to a large extent effective promulgation of the message by all means possible is as important as the prosecution of the policy. Apart from this, the general messages which HMG needs to get across are as follows:-

- (i) what we loosely term PIRA-bashing, emphasising the sterility, (political, socio-economic and in terms of violence) of the Provisionals' agenda;
- (ii) Government works in the interests of all the people in Northern Ireland, whatever their background, religion or geographical location (this message should, if possible, be reinforced by a programme of Ministerial visits to areas hitherto inaccessible);
- (iii) HMG is committed to, and is working actively towards, the improvement of material conditions for the disadvantaged, particularly in those areas which have hitherto considered themselves to be neglected;
- (iv) HMG is committed to ending discrimination in all fields of activity and is working vigorously to this end;
- (v) the security forces are impartial, and are present as the most practical manifestation of the Government's aim of getting the paramilitaries off the backs of the people;
- (vi) actions on the part of the security forces are no more than is necessary to defeat terrorism, and people can be helping themselves by helping the security forces; and
- (vii) the Government is committed to the establishment of political structures which will enable all shades of constitutional opinion to be represented and have a say in the way in which the Province is run.

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Conclusion

5. Much of this already forms part of government policy; and it is appropriate for the most part that the various strands should continue to be run as they are at present. But there is some degree of scope centrally for more co-ordination (as in the "aligning the security forces with civil government" initiative) and also for sharpening up the message about these policies. There is also scope for improving the co-ordination of the overall interface between the Government and some sections of the community. This last can best be done by a combination of committed people on the ground who can pull things together and enable people to cut through the red tape; together with a greater awareness by central policy makers in targetting social need and in improving the quality of service delivery.

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ANNEX A

EXISTING DATA ON ATTITUDES AND CONCERNS OF THE NATIONALIST WORKING CLASS

The following material on the attitudes and concerns of the nationalist working class is currently available.

- 1) A detailed review of socio economic conditions in the two communities was produced by the Social Steering Group as part of the 1990 PES Strategic Review. This concluded that significant social and economic disparities remain between the two sides of the community in NI, with the most serious disadvantage concentrated amongst the Catholic population. Research indicates that there is an association between feelings of relative or group deprivation and belief in the fairness of the situation; and between the absolute extent of deprivation within a group and extreme attitudes and voting behaviour of those members of the group.
- 2) To focus specifically on attitudes, a major social survey series - the British Social Attitudes Survey - was extended to include Northern Ireland from 1989 and will run for a minimum of 3 years. It is jointly funded by Government (through the Central Community Relations Unit) and the Nuffield Foundation. The first year of the study included a module which specifically addressed community relations issues, covering, inter alia: relations between Protestants and Catholics; prejudice; perceptions of equality of treatment; integration and segregation in the work-place, education and place of residence. This report is currently being finalised in PPRU. A module on Crime, Law and Order is included in the 1990 survey.
- 3) One-off studies (usually carried out by academics) of small areas which document conditions and attitudes in discrete communities. Given an extended timescale PPRU could produce a comprehensive listing of such material and a synopsis of findings.

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A comprehensive analysis of social and economic conditions from the West Belfast Study Group led by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, on which the Making Belfast Work initiative was launched in July 1988. Central Secretariat are about to undertake an update of the statistical basis of this to see what, if any, changes have occurred since the earlier Report.

- 5) A paper by Mr Hamilton (Central Secretariat) on community perceptions of Government in 1990 in North and West Belfast. It was readily accepted, including by many individuals in the areas, that it was important to eradicate terrorism. The activities of the police and Army on the ground, therefore, needed to complement and reinforce the social and economic initiatives which are also essential to improving the longer term prospects of stability and normality in these areas."

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