

GRPS 220

C O N F I D E N T I A L

CONFIDENTIAL

FM DUBLIN 22:1500Z JUNE 1981

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 208 OF 22 JUNE 1981

AND TO IMMEDIATE NIO (BELFAST)

MIPT: HUNGER STRIKE

1. THE NEW IRISH GOVERNMENT IS BOUND TO RELY ON INDEPENDENT SUPPORT AND IS LIKELY TO TAKE A MORE PUBLICLY CRITICAL LINE ON OUR POLICY IN NORTHERN IRELAND. THE LIKELY DEATH OF THE HUNGER STRIKING DEPUTY, DOHERTY, IN MID-JULY WILL ONCE AGAIN FOCUS ATTENTION (AND POSSIBLY WORLD MEDIA ATTENTION ) ON THE STRIKE. OPINION HERE, WHICH THE ELECTION SHOWS MORE SYMPATHETIC TO THE HUNGER STRIKERS THAN WE HAD IMAGINED, IS INCREASINGLY MOVING IN THEIR DIRECTION, LESS OUT OF SYMPATHY FOR THE PROVISIONALS THAN FROM CONCERN AT THE PENALTY HMG'S POLICY IS BELIEVED TO BE IMPOSING NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE BORDER IF FIANNA FAIL MOVE INTO OPPOSITION, THEY ARE LIKELY TO TAP THIS ANTI-BRITISH FEELING (AS THEY DID WHEN THEY WERE LAST IN OPPOSITION) MR HAUGHEY'S PRESENT POLICY OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS IS, BY DEFINITION, NOT AVAILABLE TO THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.

2. THE SLIGHT SOFTENING IN THE STANCE OF SOME PRISONERS AND THE FAMILIES OF THE PRESENT HUNGER STRIKERS, WHICH BOTH DR FITZGERALD AND THE IRISH COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE CLAIM TO DETECT, COULD OFFER SCOPE TO PREVENT A FURTHER DETERIORATION. IF WE TAKE NO STEPS PUBLICLY DURING THE PRESENT LULL IN STRIKERS DEATHS, EITHER THROUGH CHANGES IN THE PRISON ADMINISTRATION OR VIA THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OR BY SOME INTERNATIONAL DEVICE, TO BE SEEN TO BE DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THE STRIKE, WE WILL APPEAR HERE TO BE IN A WORSE POSITION A FEW WEEKS FROM NOW THAN WE ARE AT PRESENT IT SEEMS THAT EACH DEATH WILL LESSEN OUR ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE AND THAT THE LIKELY BACKGROUND OF SERIOUS PUBLIC DISORDER WILL MAKE AN END TO THE STRIKE MORE DIFFICULT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

FM DUBLIN 22:1430Z JUNE 1981

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 207 OF 22 JUNE 1981

AND TO IMMEDIATE NIO (BELFAST)

PS TO THE PM.

NO10 DOWNING STREET.

M.I.P.T.: HUNGER STRIKE

1. I HAD EARLIER SEEN MR O'ROURKE AT THE CANADIAN NATIONAL DAY ON FRIDAY 19 JUNE AND HE SUGGESTED I CALLED ON HIM AND MR NALLY THIS MORNING. I HAVE JUST SEEN THEM SEPARATELY AND THE FOLLOWING POINTS WERE MADE:-

(I) MR NALLY MADE THE POINT ALREADY MADE BY DR FITZGERALD THAT THE PRISONERS THOUGHT MORE ABOUT ASSOCIATION WITHIN THE WHOLE BLOCK THAN ANYTHING ELSE (SEE PARA 2 OF MY I.P.T.). HE SAID THAT WITH THE SLIGHTLY IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE IN THE PRISON WE SHOULD CONSIDER SERIOUSLY GRANTING ASSOCIATION WITHIN THE BLOCK AND AT THE SAME TIME RESTATE THE COMPLETE PACKAGE OF WHAT IS ON OFFER, AS WAS DONE IN THE STRIKE BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

(II) BOTH MADE THE POINT THAT ALREADY THE IRA AND H-BLOCK CAMPAIGN WAS CAUSING POLITICAL AND SECURITY PROBLEMS IN THE REPUBLIC. WHEN THE NEXT MAN DIES, IF THE STRIKE IS NOT RESOLVED THEN, THE SITUATION WILL BECOME WORSE AND WE SHALL THEN BE IN A PERIOD OF DEATHS FOLLOWING ONE ANOTHER AT RELATIVELY SHORT INTERVALS. WHEN THIS COINCIDES WITH THE MARCHING SEASON, WE SHOULD HAVE TO PREPARE FOR SERIOUS VIOLENCE BOTH IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE REPUBLIC SEMI-COLON

(III) IT THEREFORE SEEMED THAT THE PRICE WE WERE PAYING FOR STANDING UP TO THE IRA STRIKE WAS TURNING OUT TO BE VERY MUCH HIGHER THAN ANYONE COULD HAVE EXPECTED AND THAT OUR NARROW TACTICAL APPROACH TO THE STRIKERS WAS NO LONGER ADEQUATE. SURELY IT WAS WORTH OUR ASKING OURSELVES WHETHER OUR POLICY IN THE PRISONS WAS SO GOOD THAT IT NEED NOT BE CHANGED. OUR FEARS ABOUT PROTESTANT ANGER IF WE GRANTED ASSOCIATION WITH THE BLOCKS WAS UNDERSTANDABLE. BUT COULD WE NOT SIMPLY SAY THAT THE LAW WHICH FORBIDS MILITARY ASSOCIATION AND DRILLING OUTSIDE PRISON WOULD APPLY INSIDE AS WELL?

2. MR O'ROURKE SAID THAT THE TAOISEACH WOULD PROBABLY BE SENDING A MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER ABOUT THE STRIKE WITHIN A DAY OR TWO.

3. SEE MY I.F.T.  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L

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FM DUBLIN 22:1415Z JUNE 1981.

TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 206 OF 22 JUNE 1981

AND TO IMMEDIATE NIO (BELFAST)

ms.

HUNGER STRIKE

1. DR GARRET FITZGERALD CALLED ON ME YESTERDAY EVENING AT MY HOME. HE SAID THAT HIS TALKS WITH THE LABOUR PARTY HAD BEEN GOING WELL AND IT WAS PROBABLE THAT HE WOULD FORM A GOVERNMENT ON 30 JUNE. IF THE HUNGER STRIKE HAD NOT BEEN RESOLVED BY THAT DATE HE SAID THAT, ASSUMING HE WAS TAOISEACH, HE WOULD BE ASKING FOR AN URGENT MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. IT DID NOT APPEAR THAT ANY NEW MOVES WERE IN TRAIN SINCE THE LAST DEATHS TO RESOLVE THE STRIKE AND ANOTHER DEATH WOULD MAKE THE SITUATION WORSE. HE AND OTHER POLITICIANS HAD SERIOUSLY UNDERESTIMATED THE SUPPORT FOR THE H-BLOCK CAMPAIGN. OPINION AFTER THE NEXT DEATH MIGHT CREATE SUCH A FURTHER EXTENSION OF THIS SYMPATHY THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN THE SOUTH COULD BE AFFECTED.

2. AS REGARDS THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE H-BLOCK, DR FITZGERALD SAID THAT, ACCORDING TO HIS SOURCES, THERE WAS A DEFINITE DIFFERENCE OF VIEW BETWEEN THE PRESENT RELATIVES AND THE IRA AND WE SHOULD EXPLOIT IT. THE NEXT BUNCH OF RELATIVES MIGHT WELL BE LESS INCLINED TO KEEP AN INDEPENDENT LINE. ON ASSOCIATION HE MADE THE POINT THAT THE PRISONERS NOT ON HUNGER STRIKE FELT THAT THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE PRISON WAS NOW BETTER THEN BEFORE THE STRIKE STARTED. THEY WERE NO LONGER BEING ABUSED BY WARDERS. IN SOME WAY THEY FELT THAT THE RIGHT TO ASSOCIATE WITHIN THE WHOLE BLOCK WOULD GIVE THEM A-KIND OF PROTECTION IN THIS RESPECT ONCE THE STRIKE IS OVER.

3. SEE M.I.F.T.

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GROUPS 625  
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FROM DUBLIN 220955Z JUNE 1981  
TO IMMEDIATE F C O (DESKBY 221145Z)  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 205 OF 22 JUNE

PS TO THE PM.  
NO10 DOWNING STREET.

H-BLOCK: INTERVIEW WITH DAVID O'CONNELL.

1. YESTERDAYS SUNDAY TRIBUNE CONTAINED AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH DAVID O'CONNELL, (VICE PRESIDENT PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN).

2. THE CRUCIAL PASSAGES READ AS FOLLOWS:-

Q. COULD THE IRISH COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE PROPOSALS BE THE BASIS OF A SETTLEMENT?

A. THE ONLY BASIS FOR A SOLUTION IS THE IMPLEMENTING OF THE FIVE POINTS PUT FORWARD BY THE PRISONERS THEMSELVES IN THE H-BLOCKS AND ARMAGH. WHAT MADE THE COMMISSIONS TWO STATEMENTS ON THIS MATTER INTERESTING WAS THEIR SIMILARITY TO THE FIVE POINTS FROM THE PRISONERS.

Q. YOU DID SAY THOUGH, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE EARLIER THIS WEEK, THAT THE COMMISSION'S TWO STATEMENTS, TAKEN TOGETHER, APPEARED TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY - IN ALL THAT WAS IMPORTANT - THE SAME AS THE FIVE DEMANDS. DOES THAT MEAN THAT IF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT SOMETHING ALONG THOSE LINES, THERE MAY BE THE BASIS THERE FOR A SETTLEMENT?

A. NO, WHAT WE ARE SAYING IS THAT THERE IS A SIMILARITY. WE ARE GOING TO SEE THIS COMMISSION AND POINT OUT THAT THERE IS THIS SIMILARITY, BUT THAT THEIR TWO STATEMENTS ARE DRESSED UP IN A LOT OF VERBIAGE ABOUT MILITARY TRAINING AND ALL THAT NONSENSE. WE ARE GOING TO TELL THEM IT IS NOT HELPFUL TO BE PUTTING THIS IN.

WE FIND THE STATEMENTS INTERESTING. WE ARE GLAD THAT THEY HAVE TAKEN THE INTEREST THAT THEY ARE SHOWING (SEMI COLON) BUT WE FEEL THAT INSTEAD OF ADDRESSING QUERIES TO US AS TO WHAT WE ACCEPT OR DON'T, THEY SHOULD PUT IT SQUARELY TO THATCHER THAT SHE SHOULD ACCEPT THE FIVE POINTS - BECAUSE IN ESSENCE THE COMMISSION HAVE RECOGNISED THAT THE FIVE POINTS PUT FORWARD BY THE PRISONERS ARE REASONABLE AND SHOULD BE CONCEDED.

Q. JOHN HUME AND OTHERS SAID THAT YOUR ATTITUDE TO THESE PROPOSALS IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE WHEN SUCH PROPOSALS ARE PUT TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT THEIR RESPONSE IS TO SAY THERE IS NO POINT IN EVEN CONSIDERING THEM, BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO INDICATION THAT THE PRISONERS WILL ACCEPT THEM. IT IS FOR THAT REASON THAT I THINK OUR READERS WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HEARING WHETHER THESE PROPOSALS, IN SOME FORM, COULD GIVE THE BASIS FOR A SETTLEMENT.

A. THE PROPOSALS FOR A SOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT ARE THE FIVE BASIC DEMANDS OF THE PRISONERS....

/Q. ARE YOU

Q. ARE YOU SAYING THAT ANY SOLUTION WILL HAVE TO INVOLVE THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SIGNING A PIECE OF PAPER CONTAINING THE FORM OF WORDS IN WHICH THOSE FIVE DEMANDS HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED? ARE PEOPLE GOING TO DIE FOR A FORM OF WORDS?

A. NO. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIVE DEMANDS BY THE BRITISH. THEY NEEDN'T PUT ANYTHING ON PAPER ( SEMI COLON) ALL THEY NEED TO DO IS LIFT THE TELEPHONE AND TELL THE GOVERNOR. A TELEPHONE CALL COULD DO IT.

IN RELATION TO JOHN HUME, HE IS TRYING TO SOFTEN THE BRITISH POSITION. HE IS MORE CONCERNED WITH NOT OFFENDING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, WITH SAVING THEIR FACE, THAN WITH SECURING THE FIVE DEMANDS OF THE PRISONERS. WE THINK IT'S A PITY THAT HE'S PLAYING THAT GAME.

Q. CAN I CLARIFY ONE POINT. YOU SAID THE PRISONERS HAD NEVER INTENDED THE DEMAND FOR FREE ASSOCIATION TO INCLUDE FREEDOM TO ENGAGE IN MILITARY TRAINING. IN YOUR VIEW, THEN, IF THAT DEMAND WERE GRANTED, THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM - NO PROVOCATIVE DISPLAYS OF MILITARY DRILLING OR TRAINING?

A. THE PRISONERS HAVE NEVER DEMANDED FACILITIES TO ENGAGE IN PROVOCATIVE DISPLAYS, MILITARY TRAINING, OR ANYTHING ON THOSE LINES. THEY HAVE ASKED FOR FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION...

Q. YES, BUT IT'S A QUESTION OF WHAT THEY MEAN BY THAT, AND WHAT THEY WOULD DO WITH IT IF THEY GOT IT?

A. WELL, THE ANSWER IS TO BE FOUND IN THE LONG KESH CAGES, WHERE THE REMAINING SPECIAL CATEGORY PRISONERS HAVE FREE ASSOCIATION. WE DON'T GET ANY REPORTS THAT THE BRITS ARE VERY UPSET ABOUT MILITARY TRAINING GOING ON THERE. WE DON'T BELIEVE THIS IS AN ISSUE.

Q. WHO IS GOING TO BE IN CONTROL OF ANY NEGOTIATION THAT TAKE PLACE, AND AN EVENTUAL DECISION ON THE NEGOTIATIONS?

A. THE PRISONERS THEMSELVES. THEY HAVE A CHAIN OF COMMAND IN LONG KESH. BRENDAN MC FARLANE IS THE O.C. AND HE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THOSE ON HUNGER STRIKE, THEY WILL MAKE THE FINAL DECISION AND NOBODY ELSE.

3. FULL TEXT FOLLOWS BY BAG.

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