



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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Prime Minister

You will have seen the telegrams from Dublin and Washington suggesting we should restate our position more clearly. But at A my Affairs concludes that no initiatives are necessary, and at B he sets out the line he intends to take with the ICRC.

5 August 1981

Dear Michael

I hope you shall examine them - then view seems totally

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NORTHERN IRELAND: HUNGER STRIKE AND ICRC REPORT *irresponsible.*

I wrote to you on 30 July explaining why my Secretary of State had concluded that there was at that time no case for any initiative by the Government in respect of the hunger strike.

Since then two further strikers, Lynch and Doherty (who was a member of the Irish Dail), have died; one striker, Quinn, has been given nourishment and medical treatment on the instructions of his relations while he was in a coma, and has continued to co-operate with the medical staff since regaining consciousness; and one new striker, McCluskey, has joined the strike in replacement of Lynch. The prisoners have announced that they will name a replacement for Doherty by next Monday. Statements critical both of the strikers and of HMG have been issued by Cardinal O Fiaich and by the Irish Government; the "Friends of Ireland" (the recently formed group of US Congressmen which includes Senator Kennedy and Speaker 'Tip' O'Neill) are asking to see President Reagan to press him to intervene over the hunger strike; and we have received an indication of the views of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to which you referred in your letter of 31 July.

On the general situation my Secretary of State remains of the view set out in my letter of 30 July - there is no case for any initiative by the Government at present. This could change as the various pressures at work have their effect, and he will continue to monitor the situation closely. One new development is the formation in the past few days of an as yet ill-defined body calling itself the "Help the Prisoners Committee", with which Cardinal O Fiaich has some connexion, and which has called a meeting for Friday of this week for the relatives of all the protesting prisoners (of whom there are over 400 in the Maze). We do not at present know the purpose of this gathering, and we shall watch developments with interest to see if any reaction by HMG appears desirable.

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On the ICRC, we are proposing, subject to the concurrence of the FCO, to pass a message to them through UKMIS Geneva to say that we are surprised to learn of their conclusion that "only minor differences" exist between HMG's position and the substance of the five demands of the hunger strikers; that HMG see it rather differently; and that they might like to consider some amplifications of their report to provide the basis for their view. Failing that, they might like to provide us with such amplification privately. We do not think it would be tactful to challenge their judgement more directly than this; nor do we think we should press them to change their view since they are jealous of their independence and sensitive over any attempts to influence their reports: but a suggestion that they amplify their view may have a useful effect.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Roderic Lyne (FCO).

*Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins*

M W HOPKINS

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