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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
GREAT GEORGE STREET,  
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

William Rickett Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

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cc Press Office

7 August 1981

Dear Willie,

... I attach the text of a press statement which my Secretary of State is releasing this afternoon (in response to the much-publicised overnight statement by the Republican Press Centre).

attached

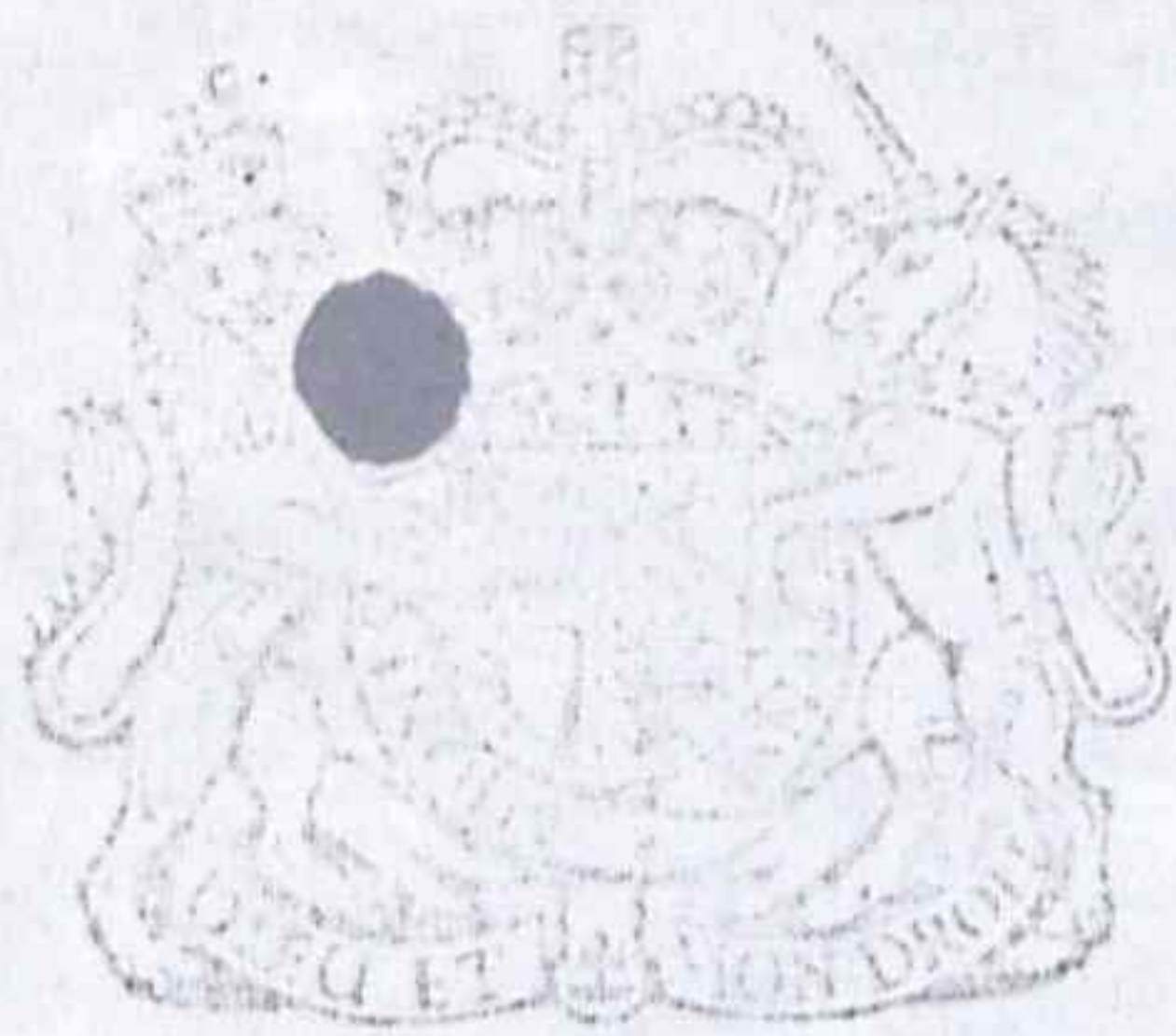
I am copying this letter and enclosure to Roderic Lyne (FCO)

Yours sincerely  
Mike Hopkins  
M W HOPKINS

Prime Minister 2

You will wish to see Mr Atkins' statement, as well as the text of the statement by the Republican Press Centre attached.





# Northern Ireland Office

## Press Notice

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L17/81

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August 7, 1981

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, RT HON HUMPHREY ATKINS MP

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A statement was released by the Belfast Republican Press Centre on 6 July, said to be issued on behalf of certain prisoners in the Maze prison, who describe themselves as "the Republican Prisoners of War, Long Kesh". I note in passing that all prisoners in the Maze have been convicted in open court of criminal offences, many of them of a very vident kind.

I have studied this statement with care in the hope that it would indicate that the protesting prisoners now accepted that in their own best interest they should bring the protest and the hunger strike to an early end. To my profound regret I can see nothing in this latest document which represents any change of substance from their statement of 4 July, and nothing to suggest that they have understood the Government's reasons for refusing to concede their five demands.

I welcome (as I did in my statement of 8 July)/<sup>the fact</sup> that the protestors are no longer claiming a privileged regime to set them apart from the other prisoners. That claim was always totally unjustified. Equally I deplore the protestors' apparent inability to understand the inevitable consequences which flow from the need for the prison authorities to retain proper control over the daily life of a prison. What the prisoners' statement calls "the present Victorian prison system" is in fact in the Maze, a complex of physical facilities of the most up-to-date kind, coupled with a regime which is not only one of the best in the UK but which stands comparison with the most enlightened systems in the western world.



I set out in my statement of 8 July, point by point, what would happen in the prison when the protest ended. I have nothing to add to that. The conditions under which in Northern Ireland prisoners are obliged to undertake various forms of work and are allowed to associate with each other are in substance the conditions which prevail in all other British prisons. The Government sees no justification for giving the prisoners in Northern Ireland a substantially different regime - and certainly not on the ground that some of them claim that the serious crimes they committed were politically motivated. I have repeatedly made clear - as in my statement of 8 July - that it is the Government's intention to be flexible and humane in applying the present regime; but this does not mean that we will recreate the 'special category' regime, or anything approaching it.

It is of the greatest importance that the protestors, their families, and others who either influence their thinking or claim to speak for them, should understand clearly that the protestors' demands, as elaborated in their latest statement, cannot be met unless the Government agree to the abandonment by the prison authorities of their proper responsibility for control within the prison. This the Government will not do, now or at any later stage.

I have sought in this statement to explain the underlying reason why it is impossible for the Government to do what the protestors ask. If the prisoners do not find it clear, the authorities are always ready to clarify it to the hunger strikers or to any individual prisoner on request. I sincerely hope



E.R.

that the protestors will now seriously reconsider the wisdom of continuing to pursue a course which cannot produce any benefit for them.

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8889 NIOLON G  
74163 STOCAS G

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TELEX TO: - R.D. CORBETT

FROM: - BOB TEMPLETON

BELFAST REPUBLICAN PRESS CENTRE 6.8.81

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WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO RELEASE THE FOLLOWING SUPPLIED STATEMENT FROM THE REPUBLICAN PRISONERS OF WAR, LONG KESH.

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" 1. "WE, REPUBLICAN PRISONERS IN THE H BLOCKS HAVE BEEN ASKED TO ELABORATE ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF OUR JULY 4TH STATEMENT AND ARE ONLY TOO HAPPY TO OBLIGE.

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"WE AGAIN REITERATE THAT WE ARE NOT SEEKING ELITIST OR PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT FROM OTHER PRISONERS:

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2. "WE ARE NOT SEEKING TO TAKE OVER THE PRISON. IT IS LUDICROUS AND RIDICULOUS TO EVEN SUGGEST OTHERWISE: THE EVIDENCE OF THIS WAS CLEARLY DISPLAYED IN OUR JULY 4TH STATEMENT AND WILL BE REINFORCED IN THIS STATEMENT.

3. "WITH NEITHER OF THESE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF BRITISH POLICY IN QUESTION THERE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE REASON WHY A SOLUTION IS ENVISAGED IN THIS STATEMENT SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED. WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, IT IS THE BRITISH, FOR INFLATED AND

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GROSSLY EXAGGERATED POLITICAL REASONS, WHO HAVE THE POWER TO END THIS ISSUE TO EVERYONE'S SATISFACTION YET THEY REFUSE TO ACT SENSIBLY, HUMANELY, REALISTICLY OR REASONABLY TO THIS ISSUE.

4. "THE BRITISH REFUSAL TO SETTLE LEAVES US WITH ABSOLUTELY NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO CONTINUE WITH THIS STRATEGY. THEIR DEFIANCE, IN THE FACE OF REASON BASED ON THE REALITY THAT AN OBVIOUS AND PRINCIPLED SOLUTION EXISTS, CHALLENGES THE AUTHORITY OF EVERY CONCERNED BODY IN IRELAND. IT IS OUR OPINION THAT EVERY AUTHORITY HAS PURSUED A MODERATE APPROACH WHICH THE BRITISH HAVE TREATED AS WEAKNESS AND DISMISSED CONTEMPTUOUSLY.

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IF FURTHER DEATHS ARE TO BE AVOIDED MORE VIGOUROUS PRESSURE  
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WILL HAVE TO BE APPLIED TO THE BRITISH BY THE OFFENDED IRISH  
AUTHORITIES WHICH WE PRIMARILY PINPOINT AS THE DUBLIN GOVERNMENT  
THE SDLP AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

5. THERE IS AVAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRISON CONDITIONS AND  
THE PRISON SYSTEM. PRISONERS CAN BE HELD IN DECENT CONDITIONS  
BUT STILL BE TREATED AS SUB-HUMAN. WHAT IN ESSENCE WE SEEK IS  
THE UPLIFTING OF THE PRESENT VICTORIAN PRISON SYSTEM. WE ARE  
CONVINCED THAT ALL PRISONERS ARE ENTITLED AS HUMAN BEINGS TO  
RETAIN THEIR DIGNITY AND SELF RESPECT, THE PRESENT SYSTEM  
VIRTUALLY UNCHANGED FROM THE 19TH CENTURY, DENIES PRISONERS  
BOTH.

6. NO ELABORATION IS NEEDED ON THE CLOTHING DEMAND, PRISON  
CLOTHES ARE E E E RE ARE EITHER ABOLISHED OR RETAINED.

7. AS WE POINTED OUT, IT TAKES GOODWILL AND THE ALL IMPORTANT  
DESIRE - WHICH BREEDS FLEXIBILITY - TO END THIS ISSUE. THE  
BRITISH DO NOT POSSESS EITHER AND THE STARK EVIDENCE OF THIS  
IS THEIR DOGMATIC REFUSAL TO PARALLEL OR EVEN INCORPORATE OUR  
VIEWS ON PRISON WORK INTO THEIR VIEWS.

WE HAVE ALREADY SAID THAT WHAT THE REGIME REGARDS AS WORK WE DO  
NOT. ALSO AN EXAMINATION OF WHAT WE PROPOSE WILL REVEAL THAT A  
HIGH LEVEL OF COMPATIBILITY EXISTS.

THE GOVERNMENT'S "WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE PROTEST ENDS?" STATEMENT  
COMPOUNDS OUT POINT THAT THE PRISONER IS AN UNOPINIONATED  
ROBOTIC OBJECT IN THEIR EYES, SOMETHING WHOSE ENTIRE LIFE IS  
TOTALLY PROGRAMMED, THIS GOVT ATTITUDE IS WRONG AND CAN ONLY  
LEAD TO MORE DEATHS.

AS POINTED OUT IN OUR JULY 4TH STATEMENT WE ARE PREPARED TO  
CLEAN WINGS AND BLOCKS.

AS WELL AS THAT WE ARE WILLING TO DO ANY MAINTENANCE WORKING  
WITHIN OUR CAPABILITY SUCH AS PAINTING OUT BLOCKS. WE ARE  
PREPARED TO DO OUR OWN LAUNDRY IF FACILITIES ARE MADE  
AVAILABLE FOR US WITHIN OUR BLOCKS. ALSO. GIVEN THE  
FACILITIES, WHICH WOULD NOT AMOUNT TO MUCH, WE ARE  
PREPARED TO DO OUR OWN COOKING WITHIN OUR BLOCKS.

THE TERM "SELF-EDUCATION" SEEMS TO HAVE CAUSED SOME  
CONFUSION. BASICALLY WE DEFINE SELF-EDUCATION AS THE RIGHT TO  
CHOOSE HOW YOU FEEL YOU SHOULD BE EDUCATED AND WHAT SUBJECT  
YOU SHOULD PURSUE IN YOUR EDUCATION.

IT MUST BE REALISED THAT UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES  
EDUCATION AS WORK IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN  
CULTURAL OR ACADEMIC EDUCATION DURING THE PRISON WORKING DAY.  
USUALLY A PRISONER HAS TO FORFEIT HIS ASSOCIATION TO ATTEND  
A CLASS. DAYTIME EUDCATION IS AVAILABLE USUALLY ON Y FOR THE  
EDUCATIONALLY SUBNORMAL.

BUT THE MACHINATIONS FOR AN EDUCATION SYSTEM IS ENVISAGED BY US  
ALREADY EXIST. WE ENVISAGE AN EDUCATION SYSTEM WHERE PRISONERS  
OF PROVEN OUTSTANDING TUTORIAL ABILITY CAN BLEND WITH OUTSIDE  
TEACHERS TO PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. IT IS FACT  
THAT THE IRISH LANGUAGE, WHICH ORIGINALLY WAS LIMITED TO ONLY  
A FEW PRISONERS, HAS BEEN TAUGHT BY SOME OF THE AFORE-  
MENTIONED PRISONERS TO 80% OF ALL BLANKETMEN, SO SUCCESSFUL  
HAS THIS SELF EDUCATION SYSTEM BEEN THAT IRISH HAS VIRTUALLY



REPLACED ENGLISH AS THE PRINCIPAL LANGUAGE IN THE PROTESTING  
BLOCKS. EXCEPTIONALLY ADEPT AT HANDICRAFTS AND BLANETMEN WHO  
ARE ACCOMPLISHED MUSICIANS - ALL OF WHO WOULD BE WILLING TO PASS  
ON THEIR KNOWLEDGE.

THE PRIMARY PRISONERS ORIENTATED EDUCATION WOULD BE THE  
IRISH LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND HISTORY.

ALSO WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE CHOICE OF THE WIDE RANGE OF  
EDUCATIONAL SUBJECTS THAT ARE AVAILABLE AT PRESENT TO CONFORMING  
PRISONERS. THERE WILL BE PRISONERS TAKING 'A' AND 'O' LEVEL  
EXAMINATIONS AND OPEN UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS AND TEACHERS  
WILL BE NEEDED TO PROVIDE SPECIALIST EDUCATION. WE DO NOT  
OBJECT TO THIS.

AS CAN BE SEEN A SUBSTANTIAL DEGREE OF COMPATIBILITY EXISTS  
BUT IT TAKES THE GOVT TO MEET US HALFWAY, AS WE HAVEMET THEM  
AS ILLUSTRATED ABOVE. WE ARE NOT GOING TO ENGAGE IN  
YBREWADING DEMAENING WORK.

8. THERE IS NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD NOT NOT HAVE THE FREEDOM OF  
THE WING FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE HOURS OF LICK UP, IT WOULD BE OF  
BENEFIT EDUCATIONALLY AND WITH PRISON OFFICERS GUARANTEED UMMUNITY  
FROM ATTACK OF REBUKE THEIR SUPERVISORY ROLES WOULD NOT BE  
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ DIMINISHED SEGREGATION IS A MUST IF ANY DEGREE  
OF HARMONY IS TO EXIST WITHIN THE PRISON.

WING VISITS SHOULD NOT PRESENT ANY PROBLEM TO THE AUTHORITIES.  
LETTERS, VISITS AND PARCELS ARE AT PRESENT A PRIVILEGE TO  
CONFORMING PRISONERS TO BE WITHDRAWN AS THE REGIME SEES FIT.  
WE WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE A PRISONERS RIGHT.

ALSO WE FAIL TO SEE WHY PRISONERS AT ONE END OF THIS  
CAMP SHOULD RECEIVE A SUBSTANTIAL FOOD PARCEL AND WE SHOULD  
RECEIVE ONLY FOUR POUNDS OF FRUIT. WE WANT OUR FOOD  
PARCEL INCREASED TO THE AMOUNT AVAILABLE AT THE OTHER  
END OF THE CAMP. THE ONLY REASON FOR THIS PARTICULAR PIECE  
OF INEQUALITY IS PUNITIVE.

9. REMISSION AS WE POINTED OUT IS ONLY A BY PRODUCT OF THIS  
ISSUE. THERE IS NO REASON WHY FULL REMISSION CANNOT BE  
RESTORED.

10. WE CALL ON ALL CONCERNED ON THIS ISSUE, THE BRITISH,  
THE DUBLIN GOVT, THE SDLP, THE CHURCH AND ALL BODIES WHO WERE  
INVOLVED IN THIS ISSUE TO RESPOND TO THIS STATEMENT.

IT SHOULD NOT BE DISREGARDED SOLELY BECAUSE WE WROTE IT

+++ENDS+++

7 AUGUST 1981

CORRECTION :- PARA BEFORE NO 8. FIRST WORD SHOULD READ  
UNREWADING NOT YBREWADING

918889 NIOLON G  
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