

OPS

Subject filed on Ireland.
Hunger Strike: Pt 2

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T 34 C / 81

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FM FCO 251133Z FEB 81

TO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN

TELEGRAM NUMBER 29 OF 25 FEBRUARY 1981

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON HOLY SEE

WLO 383

HUNGER STRIKE

1. PLEASE PASS FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE TAOISEACH.

BEGINS.

AS YOU WILL KNOW THERE IS A RENEWED THREAT OF A HUNGER STRIKE AT THE MAZE PRISON BY ONE OR MORE PRISONERS DEMANDING TO QUOTE THE STATEMENT PUT OUT IN THEIR NAME, "TO BE TREATED AS POLITICAL PRISONERS".

IT IS A MATTER OF GREAT REGRET THAT THE ENDING OF THE LAST HUNGER STRIKE ON 18 DECEMBER, WITHOUT LOSS OF LIFE, DID NOT LEAD AS WE HAD HOPED TO THE PHASING OUT OF ALL FORMS OF PROTEST AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIME WHICH WAS AND REMAINS AVAILABLE TO NON-PROTESTING PRISONERS. DETAILS OF THIS REGIME WERE SET OUT IN THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S STATEMENT OF 4 AND 19 DECEMBER AND IN MORE DETAIL IN THE 32 PAGE DOCUMENT ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON REGIME.

AS HM AMBASSADOR HAS EXPLAINED TO YOUR OFFICIALS, EVERYTHING THE PRISONERS HAVE SAID AND DONE SINCE 19 DECEMBER HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE ONLY REGIME WHICH THEY ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT WITHOUT PROTEST IS THAT WHICH INCORPORATES THEIR 5 DEMANDS, IE A PRISONER - OF - WAR REGIME.

WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO CONCEDE THESE DEMANDS AND WE BELIEVE THE PRISONERS KNOW IT. WE THINK THAT THEIR OBJECT NOW IS TO BRING ABOUT ONE OR MORE DEATHS OF HUNGER STRIKERS IN ORDER TO INFLAME COMMUNITY PASSIONS. ALL THE EVIDENCE IS THAT COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR THE PROTESTERS IS AT ITS LOWEST EBB. IF THERE IS ANOTHER HUNGER STRIKE WE EXPECT IT TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A CAMPAIGN OF PROVISIONAL IRA AND INLA VIOLENCE DESIGNED TO PROVOKE THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY WHOSE MOOD IS MORE VOLATILE THAN AT THE TIME OF THE LAST HUNGER STRIKE.

HM GOVERNMENT'S POSITION REMAINS ON THE RECORD IN THE STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND TO WHICH I HAVE REFERRED: NO POLITICAL STATUS: NO CONCESSION TO THE 5 DEMANDS: THE REGIME DESCRIBED AT THE ENDING OF THE LAST HUNGER STRIKE REMAINS AVAILABLE: WE ARE COMMITTED TO KEEPING PRISON CONDITIONS UNDER REVIEW FROM A HUMANITARIAN POINT OF VIEW.

THE FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER WILL ACT WITH SENSITIVITY AS WELL AS FIRMNESS TO PROTECT THE COMMUNITY FROM VIOLENCE FROM

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WHATEVER QUARTER ARISING OUT OF ANY RENEWED HUNGER STRIKE. WE SHALL DO ALL WE CAN TO DISCOURAGE MODERATE AND RATIONAL PEOPLE FROM BEING TAKEN IN BY PROVISIONAL IRA PROPAGANDA. I AM SURE THAT WE HAVE YOUR SUPPORT IN THIS. I THOUGHT I OUGHT TO LET YOU KNOW HOW WE SEE THE SITUATION AT THIS STAGE AND OF COURSE IF THERE IS ANYTHING YOU FEEL YOU CAN DO TO REINFORCE THE ACTIONS WE SHALL BE TAKING TO INFORM THOSE WHO MIGHT HAVE INFLUENCE ON THE PRISONERS, THIS WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL. MARGARET THATCHER.
ENDS.

2. THIS IS REPEATED TO WASHINGTON AND HOLY SEE FOR THEIR OWN INFORMATION ONLY. THE PRIME MINISTER WILL PROBABLY SPEAK TO PRESIDENT REAGAN ON SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME LINES.

CARRINGTON

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