



Prime Minister

I hope all our Ambassadors
are as splendidly won't as ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~attached~~
in the attached telegrams.

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INFORMATION WORK ON NORTHERN IRELAND OVERSEAS

On 7 May the Cabinet invited me, in consultation with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to arrange for further information to be disseminated overseas in support of the Government's position.

2. In the past few weeks our main Posts abroad have been sent several Guidance telegrams, listing key arguments to deploy with the media and other opinion-formers. At the same time our Posts continue to be sent a wide range of other material including Ministerial statements, background briefs and pamphlets, which they have been drawing on actively.

3. On 8 May we issued a further Guidance telegram which suggested that Heads of Post should make further efforts with the media, and which highlighted some of the main points to put across. Our Ambassador and members of his staff in the United States have appeared on television a number of times. Elsewhere (notably in Western Europe) our Ambassadors have been active with local editors and parliamentarians. We have widened the list of posts receiving the briefing material mentioned above.

4. Very many overseas news reports on Northern Ireland have of course come direct from the 400 journalists and TV crews, from all over the world, who are currently in Belfast; and this is something which affects the capacity of our posts to influence what gets printed.

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5. Our Embassy in Washington reckons that three-quarters of the editorials in American papers have been favourable to us. It is also worth noting that the recent anti-British demonstrations on the Continent seem largely to have been Communist inspired. Our posts are now directing their efforts to nailing the lie that with a little more flexibility on our part the hunger strikes could have been ended.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to Cabinet colleagues, and to the Secretary to the Cabinet.

I.H.S.

14 May 1981