

SUBJECT.

PRIME MINISTER TALKING TO MICHAEL ALISON, 4 JULY 1981

09.55 hr

gc. Monitor set

PM: You have had a terrible time?

time

MA: No we've had a good/but I just need to take your mind on a couple of points. First I should report that the Irish Commission have now asked officially for permission to go in and see the hunger strikers and that they want to go in to persuade the hunger strikers to desist from their hunger strike unconditionally, but on the basis that we have a moral obligation to pursue the course of development that we've outlined in our public statement. In other words they are going to say to the hunger strikers that there is no hope of securing any objective whilst we are under duress.

PM: But I think that we have to agree to that Michael. Is Ken Stowe listening. No he isn't. Whose listening from your end.

MA: It's just you and me at the moment. That was the line we've agreed hitherto and so if they do persuade them to go off the hunger strike they will do so unconditionally. But the Commission will then say in the light of what the Secretary of State said in his public statement we really do think the Government have got an obligation to move ahead on all those three areas.

PM: Yes. Please let it be absolutely firmly understood that we do not have a moral obligation to give in to the five demands. It must be understood that control and security remain with HM.

MA: Right, absolutely and that is clearly understood and they are themselves going to say that. Now there is, this is really what I need to take your mind on Prime Minister. There was a draft statement prepared and it has four paragraphs, the last two of which the Commission would much prefer us not to make.

PM: The last one I remember was the control and security point.

MA: Yes, they say they would much prefer to make that in their statement. That they regard that any moral obligation that may be upon us must be reflected by a moral obligation to reflect the fact that the Governors have got to govern the prison; and we would rather prefer it to come from

/them

MA: from them in their statement.

PM: I still think we must nevertheless put it in ours. We don't necessarily put it as we don't necessarily attach it to them. But in our statement we say we have made it clear to the Commission that control and security must remain and continue to remain with the authorities.

MA: Yes, that will be fine. As the statement stands I welcome the acceptance by the Commission they would much rather they made that themselves.

PM: You can say we have made it clear to the Commission that in any future arrangements control and authority must remain with the authorities of the prison. And that principle cannot be compromised.

MA: We can certainly say that coming from us and they will reiterate it for their own side. The only other paragraph ...

PM: I hope they will reiterate it Michael

MA: They are committed to doing so and I will get a further commital.

PM: They must reiterate it otherwise its not fair and I can't go ahead.

MA: The other paragraph in the statement they would much rather we did not make at this stage is the reference to the Conference of Irish Bishops which has called for an end to the hunger strike. Because it was such a fierce statement from the Commissioners' point of view and they are going to have such a rough time with the prisoners that they think it would be unhelpful to refer to the Irish Bishops at this stage or indeed to the European Commission.

PM: Oh in that case Michael they havn't got anything left in that statement.

MA: It would then simply be a bland statement about my authorising them to go into the hunger strikers on the basis on our public statement and on the basis that we retain full control.

/PM

PM:- Yes, but I think we then can say, that is a statement, then we HM adds our rider, not riders our fundamentals, the one on control and authority that has been made clear; secondly that we have urged the Commission on the European Commission of Human Rights. And what was the third one - well the Bishops have already been made and I thought in the end it was a bit compromising in the end - so we've dropped the Bishops.

MA: OK. I will take that back and proceed.

PM: Right , Michael you are doing a super job.