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cc: CO
FCO
PM

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

12 May 1981

CS

Telephone Conversation with Mr. Nally

Dermot Nally rang me earlier today from Dublin. He said that the Taoiseach had asked him to convey to London his genuine and deep concern about the situation in Northern Ireland.

According to Mr. Nally, Mr. Haughey believes that the Catholic population in the North is now completely under the control of the IRA. Mr. Haughey feared that the population in those areas of the Republic close to the Border was also being increasingly influenced by the IRA. There was now a possibility that in an Election, as many as six seats in the Border areas might be won by IRA sympathisers. If this were to happen, it was not inconceivable that IRA-inclined members of the Dail would hold the balance of power after the Election. This would obviously be a thoroughly undesirable situation.

Mr. Nally said that the Taoiseach had tried to get the hunger strikers to associate themselves with an appeal to the European Commission on Human Rights. The hunger strikers had refused since, according to Mr. Nally, they knew they were on a winner. The Taoiseach was therefore wondering whether it would be possible for HMG to take steps to involve the Commission. Could we, for instance, take as our starting point the document issued by the Northern Ireland Office on 18 December and invite the Commission to investigate the claim that undertakings given in that document had not been carried out.

I made plain to Mr. Nally that I was sceptical about the merits of his suggestion, both from the point of view of its acceptability to HMG and from the point of view of its impact on the hunger strikers. Nonetheless I undertook to convey the Taoiseach's message to you and to the Prime Minister.

/ Mr. Nally

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Mr. Nally expressed his gratitude. He went on to say that if we here thought it would be helpful, the Taoiseach would be very ready to meet with the Prime Minister to discuss the situation. Failing that Mr. Nally himself was ready at any moment to come to London to talk matters over. I took note of the offer.

I am sending copies of this letter to Roderic Lyne (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Roy Harrington, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office

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