



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

**PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE**
SERIAL No: T 207 A/80.

subject copy filed on:- Ireland : Maze Prison : Nov 79.

Message from the Taoiseach, Mr Charles J Haughey TD
to the Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher MP Prime Minister

As the date of the threatened hunger strike in Long Kesh approaches on Monday, 27th October, I feel that I should make direct and private representations to you to convey my deep and serious concern about the repercussions on our security situation of a hunger strike and possible deaths.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Lenihan, has already expressed the Government's grave concern to the British Ambassador in Dublin and discussed the matter with Mr Atkins, the Northern Ireland Secretary, in London on 13th October.

Once a strike starts it will probably be impossible to stop it and people will inevitably die. The emotional impact on public sympathies and attitudes throughout Ireland will be grave.

The Irish Government have been successfully pursuing their campaign against subversive crime. Their success in recent months has been exceptional. They have been able to secure this success largely because of widespread public support. It is the view of our security forces that the subversive elements in our society are at present greatly shaken and demoralised. It is absolutely essential that they should not, at this point, be provided with any basis for a campaign to retrieve public support.

In response to a specific enquiry from the Government, the Irish security forces have given it as their serious and considered judgement that a hunger strike in Long Kesh would be exploited by subversives and would have a definite detrimental effect on our security efforts and should, if at all possible, be averted.

It is clear also that the Provisional IRA will fully exploit the propaganda potential of the hunger strike in the US and will undoubtedly secure widespread support as a result and a renewal of the flow of arms and funds. The flow of these funds has been in substantial decline in the earlier part of this year.

I fully appreciate that the British Government must handle sensitive political questions of this kind as they consider appropriate. I feel, however, that I should, in our common interest, draw specifically to the attention of the British Government the serious repercussions for the security situation in Ireland of a hunger strike and its likely aftermath.

In drawing attention to these matters, I hope that every possible avenue will be explored in the search of a means to avoid this dangerous development. I believe that it should be possible to find a formula, perhaps on the general lines already suggested by our Foreign Minister and by the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Irish Episcopal Conference which would avoid confrontation and in no way detract from the effectiveness of the security effort or infringe the basic principles involved.

23 October 1980