

MS

Prime Minister, 2

SECRET AND PERSONAL

Paras 5 & 6 are obviously right. I have incidentally suggested

MR. ALEXANDER

to the NIO that they should make a film on the activities of PIRA similar to that which was made about Afghanistan. I have a feeling that we are not waging the propaganda war hard enough.

We have certain indications, *

And * -14

the line that Mr. John Hume is likely to take when he comes to see the Prime Minister tomorrow.

2. He may well ask her whether Her Majesty's Government would be prepared to concede:-

- (a) the right of prisoners in the Maze to wear their own clothes at all times:
- (b) their right to enjoy "free association" at all times.

It seems to be in his mind that a concession on these two points could be put alongside selective quotations from the statement made on 18th December last to constitute a package which he could present as offering a substantial degree of compliance with the PIRA's five demands.

3. The right of free association at all times is of course the key demand; and it is out of the question. It would mean that the authorities had lost control of the regime.

4. I suppose that you could conceivably say that we should always be prepared to consider whether there could be any marginal extensions, for all conforming prisoners, on the wearing of own clothes and on free association. But I doubt whether you should do so, at any rate now, and for two reasons:

- (a) * ~ * suggest that Mr. Hume is not a channel through which the PIRA are interested in ~~speaking~~ operating.
- (b) * ~ * confirm (what I have also heard from Mr. Nally in Dublin) that the PIRA are not at present interested in any compromise whatever. They

* ~ * Passages deleted and retained under Section 3(x).

Wayland
6 January 2012

believe that they are on to a winner, that Her Majesty's Government will be put under increasing pressure, and that eventually, if they continue as they are now going with a succession of deaths of hunger-strikers, Her Majesty's Government will be forced to give in. They are not at present interested in anything but full and explicit written satisfaction on all the five demands.



SECRET AND PERSONAL

5. The concessions which we think Mr. Hume may seek would not therefore stop the hunger-strike. Nor would they help in the propaganda battle: they would simply be seen as a sign of weakening resolution in London, and would encourage the PIRA to continue. What is more, we have reason to believe that Mr. Hume knows that they would not bring about the end of the hunger-strike or the protest. If he asks for them, therefore, he will be doing so for the sake of the political use he can make of them.

6. If all this is right, this is no time to be talking or thinking about compromise. We have to stick to the present line; we have to show that our will is as strong as that of the PIRA; we have to try to undermine that belief that they can win the propaganda battle (this must mean stepping up our own counter-propaganda); and we have to continue to contain PIRA violence in the North. Only on this course have we some hope of preventing the Protestant backlash which is what the PIRA would like to provoke.

REA

Robert Armstrong

12th May 1981