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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London S.W.1

17 July 1981

Dear Michael,

Ottawa Summit: Briefing for the Prime Minister:
Northern Ireland

/ I enclose a brief for the Prime Minister's use should Northern Ireland be raised when she meets President Reagan in the margins of the Ottawa Summit.

I am copying this letter to David Wright in the Cabinet Office.

yours ever
R M J Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

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OTTAWA SUMMIT : 19 - 20 JULY 1981

NORTHERN IRELAND

POINTS TO MAKE

1. HMG are grateful for US Government's position.
2. We want to see the end of the hunger strike but not at the price of breaching fundamental principles. Solution not as easy as is sometimes suggested. We have a common interest in standing up to terrorism and blackmail.

ICRC

3. Northern Ireland Secretary has accepted ICRC's offer to visit prisons concerned. An ICRC team started work at Maze Prison on 16 July and have seen the hunger strikers and other prisoners. They will be reporting back to the Northern Ireland Secretary in due course.
4. We are grateful to the leaders of the Irish-American community for their generally moderate stance. We know how much pressure they are under.
5. Mainstream US opinion seems to be broadly with us, but we are concerned at the possibility of its erosion. We do not want to escalate a propaganda war with PIRA.

Arms for the RUC (Defensive)

6. The guns were acquired legally in the United Kingdom through normal commercial channels. (If Pressed) We would, of course, like to see the US Administration rescind the ban. But we have no wish to make an issue of this.

BACKGROUND NOTEUS Government Policy on Northern Ireland

1. On 14 July the Irish Ambassador to Washington, Mr Sean Donlon, appealed to President Reagan to intervene in the hunger strike. Dr FitzGerald also sent the same day a message asking the President to intervene with the Prime Minister to urge the British Government to implement the understanding reached with the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace. The Government has received no representations from President Reagan. White House press briefing took the line that the US Government doubted whether US intervention would be helpful at this point, and that it would stand by the President's St Patrick's Day statement.

✓ A 2. US Government policy is summed up in President Reagan's St Patrick's Day speech and remarks made by General Haig when he was asked at a press conference on 2 June why the Reagan Administration insisted on treating Northern Ireland as an internal British matter:-

'I think precisely because it is that. That does not suggest that there aren't external forces involved from time to time in one or another aspect of this anguishing problem. But I think it's clear that this is a problem that must be worked out internally by the parties. It's an historic agony for those parties and has been. One might make the case if there were not a Great Britain playing the role that it's playing there today, we might even have to create one to prevent a blood bath.

I think what we are all interested in is patiently and sympathetically to do all we can in an empathetic way to seek a resolution to these historic problems, but to recognise that they are internal and that for a public official in my position to make offhand public comments about it only aggravates a problem which needs no aggravation: so I won't do it.'

3. Both the Reagan Administration and its predecessor have taken a robust line on pro-PIRA fund-raising. The Department of Justice has brought a successful case against NORAID under the Foreign Agents Representation Act. The judge ruled on 30 April that NORAID's true principal is the IRA. But this is subject to appeal.

Information Effort

4. The great majority of serious US newspapers support HMG. But TV plays a greater role for the man in the street, and its reporting is sensational and superficial. There are over a thousand TV stations in the USA. We cannot reach many of them.

Arms for the RUC

5. It is unlikely that this will be raised. Some two years ago, the US Administration imposed a ban on the export of arms to the RUC as a result of pressure from Congress. But the RUC needed American revolvers and were able to circumvent the ban perfectly legally, by ordering them through a dealer in the United Kingdom, rather than direct from the USA. The American Consul-General in Belfast has known about this for some time but the authorities in Washington gave no sign of knowing what was going on until the beginning of June, when the State Department raised it with the Washington Embassy in a low-key way. The Embassy replied along the lines of the Points to Make.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

✓ B 6. In their statement of 4 July, the protesting prisoners said that they were not now looking for preferential treatment. In these circumstances it was decided to take up the offer made
✓ C by the ICRC in their note of 14 May, 'to visit on a regular basis all persons incarcerated as a result of the events in Northern Ireland, in order to submit, confidentially, its reports and suggestions on material and psychological conditions of

detention to the competent authorities.'. The offer went on to say 'as is known to the British authorities the sole aim of such visits is to improve, if necessary, the detention conditions and they can in no way affect the legal status of the prisoners visited'. On 15 July, the Northern Ireland Secretary issued a statement, agreed with the ICRC, announcing their visit to HM Prison Maze.

Background to ICRC Involvement in Northern Ireland

7. The ICRC has paid half a dozen visits, at HMG's invitation, to Northern Ireland prisons between 1971 and 1974, to inspect and report on the conditions under which internees and detainees were held. They have not at any time previously visited convicted prisoners, special category or otherwise.

8. The ICRC made approaches to the present Government in December 1980 (orally and just at the time the first hunger strike ended) and again in May 1981, in writing, (their note of 14 May).

9. At the end of April, three TDs (Blaney, O'Connell and Sile de Valera) asked the ICRC to intervene under the Geneva Convention. In its reply the ICRC said it remained prepared to visit Northern Ireland prisons if invited to do so by HMG.

ICRC's Locus

10. In their reply to the TDs and in the message which accompanied their note of 14 May, the ICRC made it clear that it would be operating outside the various Geneva Conventions which deal with the conditions of prisoners of war in international and non-international armed conflicts. Under Article 6 of their Statutes, they can undertake any humanitarian initiative which comes in their field of competence. It is on this basis that they are now visiting HM Prison Maze.

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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 904 OF 17 MARCH

INFO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN, NIO LONDON, NIO BELFAST AND

M I P T: PRESIDENT REAGAN'S ST PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT.

FOLLOWING IS TEXT QUOTE.

ST PATRICK'S DAY IS NOT ONLY THE FEAST DAY OF A GREAT MAN OF GOD, IT IS A SYMBOL OF THE COMMITMENT OF THE IRISH PEOPLE TO FREEDOM, TO JUSTICE AND TO THE VALUES UPON WHICH WESTERN CIVILISATION ARE BUILT.

WE IN THE UNITED STATES KNOW THE GREAT CONTRIBUTION MADE BY CITIZENS OF IRISH ANCESTRY. FROM OUR REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT DAY, IRISH AMERICANS HAVE BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE DEFENCE OF FREEDOM. BY THEIR LABOUR AND BY THEIR SACRIFICE THEY HAVE BEEN A MAJOR FORCE IN BUILDING OUR NATION.

IT IS THEREFORE GRATIFYING ON THIS ST PATRICK'S DAY TO BE ABLE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE GREAT ROLE IRELAND AND THE IRISH HAVE PLAYED IN DEFENDING AND RENEWING THE VALUES WE CHERISH.

BUT WE ARE ALSO CONSCIOUS OF THE VIOLENCE, BLOODSHED AND DESPAIR WHICH NOW HAUNT ALL OF THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND. THIS TRAGEDY CANNOT GO UNNOTICED BY THE UNITED STATES WHICH OWES SO MUCH AND HAS SUCH CLOSE TIES TO THE IRISH.

AS AN AMERICAN PROUD OF HIS IRISH ANCESTRY AND AS PRESIDENT, I RECOGNISE THE VITAL IMPORTANCE TO OUR NATION AND THE WESTERN ALLIANCE OF A PEACEFUL, JUST AND SWIFT SOLUTION TO CURRENT PROBLEMS IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE TO URGE THE PARTIES TO COME TOGETHER FOR A JUST AND PEACEFUL SOLUTION. I PRAY AND HOPE THAT THE DAY WILL COME WHEN THE TRAGEDY OF HISTORY WHICH NOW AFFLICTS NORTHERN IRELAND WILL BE OVERCOME BY FAITH, THE COURAGE AND LOVE OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE OF THE IRISH.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO CONDEMN ALL ACTS OF TERRORISM AND VIOLENCE, FOR THESE CANNOT SOLVE NORTHERN IRELAND'S PROBLEMS. I CALL ON ALL AMERICANS TO QUESTION CLOSELY ANY APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL OR OTHER AID FROM GROUPS INVOLVED IN THIS CONFLICT TO ENSURE THAT CONTRIBUTIONS DO NOT END UP IN THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO PERPETUATE VIOLENCE, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY.

I ADD MY PERSONAL PRAYERS AND THE GOOD OFFICES OF THE UNITED STATES TO THOSE IRISH -- AND INDEED TO ALL WORLD CITIZENS -- WHO WISH FERVENTLY FOR PEACE AND VICTORY OVER THOSE WHO SOW FEAR AND TERROR.

UNQUOTE.
HENDERSON
STANDARD

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18 MAR 1981

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Text of H-Blocks statement from Republican prisoners

OF 4th July 1980

THE FULL text of the weekend statement from the Republican prisoners in the H-Blocks is as follows:

We, the protesting Republican prisoners in Long Kesh, having replied in short to H Atkins's statement of June 30th, wish to expand our view of this statement.

1. The British Government are responsible for the hunger-strikes in Long Kesh. The ending of special category status was a political tactic, used by the British Government in its attempt to criminalise the Republican attack on British imperialism in Ireland. The existence of special legislation, special courts and special interrogation, plus the British administration's refusal to acknowledge a special category of prisoners, all contribute to the placing of the responsibility for this issue on that administration's shoulders.

Furthermore the British Government have had ample opportunities during the course of this issue to avoid the occurrence and re-occurrence of hunger-

strikes. The Cardinal O'Fiaich-NIO talks, and the refusal to honour the December 18th agreement, are prime examples of this.

2. Lord Gardiner, like so many other British-appointed examiners, was sent to Ireland to do a specific job — to recommend the ending of special category status so that legal credibility could be attached to the criminalisation policy.

3. It is wrong for the British Government to say that we are looking for differential treatment from other prisoners. We would warmly welcome the introduction of the five demands for all prisoners. Therefore, on this major point of British policy, there is no sacrifice of principle involved.

4. We believe that the granting of the five demands to all prisoners would not in any mean that the administration would be forfeiting control of the prison, nor would their say on prison activities be greatly diminished; but the prisoner could have his dignity restored and cease to occupy the role of establishment zombie.

5. The ECHR criticised the British Government for being inflexible and for allowing such an impasse to develop. Flexibility is in not perpetuating protest but rather trying to remove or resolve the cause of dissent which ferments such protest.

6. Mr Atkins outlines the present work routine under the title, "Prison Activity." It is a crude system which Mr Atkins disguises with flowery jargon. Yet, it should not be a major point of contention between the administration and ourselves. What the British Government recognises as "prison work" we do not. Therefore, with goodwill, "work" and the achieving of compatible arrangement, should be available without loss of principle.

Besides self-education, which would be the main prop in any agreement, we are prepared to maintain our cells, wings, blocks and engage in any activity which we define as self-maintenance.

7. Mr Atkins is either misinformed or exaggerating the free association demand. Free association means that there would be freedom of movement within the wings. Supervision need not be

restricted. That is a matter for the régime's discretion. There would be no interference with prison officers who would maintain their supervisory role. It must be remembered that H-Blocks are control units and each wing is built to accommodate 25 prisoners. So it is rather a red herring to speak of the régime losing control of the prison if the prisoners had freedom of the wing.

Equally, it is misleading to quote figures of 100 prisoners presumably associating together. We believe there should be wing visits but we do not envisage ourselves (although Mr Atkins does) running around the block as we please in large numbers.

It is unrealistic to expect Loyalists and Republicans to integrate satisfactorily together. Forced integration, or the deliberate creation of a confrontation between those who bear arms in respect of their highly conflicting political ideologies is wrong and can only lead to trouble. Even Mr Paisley recognised this fact several years back.

If studied carefully it will be seen that our definition of free association is far removed from what seems to be Mr Atkins's.

8. Prison clothes are prison clothes. It is illusory to minimise the wearing of prison clothes to half the week. Prisoners, like everyone else, sleep and for most of the other half are forced to wear prison clothes. The women in Armagh wear their own clothes and there is no objective reason why all prisoners should not be allowed to wear their own clothes.

9. If we accept that toiletries, and to a lesser extent reading material, are essential, then the weekly parcel amounts to four pounds of fruit. That speaks for itself.

10. Lost remission is a result of the protest and is not connected with the cause of it. As the British Government says, the machinery exists to reclaim it — yet, for some reason the British Government is being ambiguous on this matter. What constitutes a "subsequent good behaviour period"? What does one fifth return of remission mean? This should not be an area of disagreement for it does not directly affect the running of the system. But it is of

mutual benefit to all whom it affects that full remission is given back to we prisoners.

In giving our views on what Mr Atkins said, we have outlined what should be the basis of a solution, without loss of principle to either side in this conflict.

It could well be that Mr Atkins has been misinformed about our demands. It certainly appears from his June 30th statement that this is so. We ask all parties involved to study this statement closely. We particularly ask the British to study it. It should not be taken lightly.

By asking the British administration to come in to discuss a resolution we ask nothing unreasonable. It is common for officials from that administration to visit this prison and converse with prisoners. It has been done before.

Comrades of ours have died and eight of our other comrades presently face death on hunger-strike. Our people on the outside have died and more may die. That is why we seek immediate talks with the British administration to seek a solution to the H-Block protests. It is a reasonable request.

Signed: PRO, H-Blocks.

GRS 250A

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FM UKMIS GENEVA 141626Z

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 167 OF 14 MAY 1981

INFO PRIORITY DUBLIN

MIPT : ICRC AND NORTHERN IRELAND

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF ICRC NOTE:

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) PRESENTS ITS COMPLIMENTS TO THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND THE OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN GENEVA AND HAS THE HONOUR TO INFORM IT THAT THE ICRC IS PREOCCUPIED BY THE ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND EXPRESSES ITS WILLINGNESS TO CARRY OUT ITS HUMANITARIAN MISSION IN THAT PART OF THE UK.

THROUGH THE PRESS, THE ICRC HAS LEARNT ABOUT THE RECENT DECLARATION OF MR. HUMPHREY ATKINS, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO DISCUSS PRISON CONDITIONS IN THAT SITUATION. THROUGH ITS REGULAR VISITS TO PRISONERS AND DETAINEES IN COUNTRIES AND REGIONS CONFRONTED WITH INTERNAL DISTURBANCES OR TENSIONS, THE ICRC HAS ACCUMULATED CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE REGARDING PRISON CONDITIONS. THE ICRC THEREFORE REITERATES THAT IT IS PREPARED TO VISIT, ON A REGULAR BASIS, ALL PERSONS INCARCERATED AS A RESULT OF THE EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND, IN ORDER TO SUBMIT, CONFIDENTIALLY, ITS REPORTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON MATERIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF DETENTION TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES.

AS IS KNOWN TO THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES THE SOLE AIM OF SUCH VISITS IS TO IMPROVE, IF NECESSARY, THE DETENTION CONDITIONS AND THEY CAN IN NO WAY AFFECT THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE PRISONERS VISITED.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS AVAILS ITSELF OF THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT TO THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM THE ASSURANCE OF ITS HIGH CONSIDERATION.

ENDS.

MARSHALL

NORTHERN IRELAND LIMITED

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15 July 1981

The following statement was issued by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Humphrey Atkins MP, today:-

In my statements of 30 June and 8 July I set out once again the Government's clearly stated position in relation to the hunger strikes and the prisons protest in Northern Ireland. I also made it clear that the Government shared the concern which has been expressed in responsible quarters. I am grateful for the efforts that have been made in recent days. The Government deeply regrets that the hunger strikes are continuing and has naturally been considering further what steps it can properly take to persuade those concerned to end their action.

The Government has received an offer from the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit the prisons concerned in Northern Ireland under that part of its statutes which enables it to study the conditions of prisoners other than prisoners of war. The Committee has made it clear that its offer of assistance is made, not on the basis of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 which deal with the conditions of prisoners of war, but in exercise of its right to take humanitarian initiatives. I have decided to take up the ICRC's offer to visit the Northern Ireland Prisons concerned. A team from the ICRC will begin its work forthwith.

The ICRC have made it clear to the Government that the sole aim of their visit will be to assess and, if necessary, to make recommendations to improve the conditions of imprisonment in Northern Ireland.

It is the practice of the Committee to follow up an initial visit with subsequent visits and reports and I shall arrange for this to be done in Northern Ireland if the Committee so wishes.