

CF to note



AMO

B
Ireland

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 September 1981

Dear Lord Brodwin,

Thank you for your further letter of 22 August about the possibility of your visiting the hunger strikers in Maze prison.

I am sorry if you felt that in my letter of 17 August I had misunderstood the purpose of your request. The difficulty is that experience has shown that there is a very real risk of misunderstanding on the part of all concerned if third parties go into the prison and inter alia attempt to put the Government's stated position to the prisoners. For its part the Government has repeatedly made its stance plain, and as I said in my previous letter, we have offered many times to send in officials to elaborate on any points on which the hunger strikers may not be entirely clear. Those offers have come to nothing for the reasons which I explained.

Apart from the risk of misunderstanding I have no doubt that if you were to go into the prison with the Secretary of State's statements - and there is nothing which we can add at this stage to what has already been said - the prisoners' reaction would be to seek to start a process of negotiation on further changes, a process in which they want their spokesman to be involved. That, for the reasons set out in my earlier letter, is something the Government is not prepared to accept.

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While I am grateful for your offer and acknowledge the sincerity with which it has been made, I hope that you will understand our reasons for concluding that it would not be appropriate in the current situation.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Dehler

The Lord Brockway

Personal and not
official.

67 Southway, N20 8DE
L.A. Andrews



(2)

4-9-81

Prime Minister

House of Lords, Westminster

No need to write again?

Andrew
7/9

Dear Maggie (if I may revert to personal times)

I have been moved by the full consideration and spirit of your letters. Thank you.

As I think you know, I am not concerned so much about the IRA prisoners (whose policy I oppose) as about the polarisation of opinion in Northern Ireland and the reactions abroad.

I have not given the correspondence to the Press because I don't want the Seven Feinners to use it for propaganda, but I did send copies of my original letter, with an indication of your rejection, to a few friends, including Michael Foot and Lord Carrington. I don't want to do anything without your knowledge.

I am still ready to do anything if it will be of use. "Anything" - not quite!

Sincerely,
Pinner/.

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

Ireland



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

GREAT GEORGE STREET,

LONDON SW1P 3AJ

William Rickett Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

2 September 1981

Type for P.A.'s signature:
submit with previous
exchange of letters

Dear Willie

Ant. 2/5

Thank you for your letter of 24 August enclosing a further letter from Lord Brockway who feels that the Prime Minister misunderstood the proposals made in his letter of 7 August.

... As requested I enclose a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to Lord Brockway.

*Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins*

M W HOPKINS

DRAFT LETTER

FILE NUMBER.....

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE.....

To	Enclosures	Copies to be sent to
<p>The Lord Brockway House of Lords LONDON SW1</p> <p>(Full Postal Address)</p>		<p>(Full Address, if Necessary)</p>

LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY THE PRIME MINISTER
(Name of Signatory)

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