



Ireland

HC.

cc NIO

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

15 September 1981

Dear Mrs. McCloskey,

Thank you for your letter of 1 September.

I have indeed received it personally and read it, I hope, with true understanding. I do care very deeply about those to whom the hunger strike has brought pain and bereavement, as I do for all those in Northern Ireland who have suffered from violence in whatever form that has taken.

You ask if you can come and see me. I hope you will understand that I really do not mean to disappoint you and Mrs. Lynch, but I am afraid I do not see how such a meeting could help. I believe myself that the Government's position has already been set out very clearly. But my officials are, nevertheless, ready to explain it again carefully to anyone to whom that would be of value. That of course extends, before anyone else, to the families of the hunger strikers. If that would be of any help to you, then it can be done with all speed. But the fact is that the hunger strikers have no more to gain for themselves by carrying on. I think many people now do understand this. It is my hope that those whom the hunger strikers trust will say so to them and that my writing to you will help you to do so.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Mrs. P. McCloskey

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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

Covering **SECRET**



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

GREAT GEORGE STREET,

LONDON SW1P 3AJ

Michael Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

*Type for PM's signature:
submit with this letter attachment,*

14 September 1981 *Paul*

Dear Michael

below

You wrote to Stephen Boys Smith on 7 September enclosing a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister had received from Mrs McCloskey, the mother of one of the Maze hunger strikers. You asked for a reply by today and added that the idea of a meeting might be worthy of more serious consideration than might have been the case a month or two ago.

We have prepared a note on all three ladies which draws upon intelligence-based material. You may find it helpful to have this in your papers and I enclose a copy.

There are good arguments both for and against a meeting of this kind. If it took place, and went well, it would be a way of lending support to the families who in the recent past have been exerting a powerful influence that has been working in our interests and against those of the Provisionals. It would also be a way of showing that the Government means what it says in insisting that it will remain firm on principles but that it does care for those - and particularly the relatives - to whom the hunger strike has brought pain and bereavement. These are no doubt the points you very much had in mind.

Against that, it is questionable whether we ought to create, as Dr Fitzgerald did, a precedent for seeing relatives which we might subsequently have to breach: and we should in any case advise against seeing Mrs Hinphey who, whatever her credentials as a friend of the McCloskeys, is not, as an activist, someone whom the Prime Minister should be asked to see. Nor, though there is no reason to doubt Mrs McCloskey's assurance that the meeting would not be given publicity, can we rule out its becoming known.

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Mr Atkins feels that on balance the better course is for Mrs McCloskey's request not to be granted but that we should be ready, as we were with the Quinn family, for officials to see her if that is what she should wish. I attach a draft which, while turning down the request for a personal interview, is aimed at showing the Prime Minister's sympathetic understanding of the spirit in which the letter was written.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins

M W HOPKINS

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DRAFT LETTER

FILE NUMBER.....

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE.....

To	Enclosures	Copies to be sent to
Mrs P McCloskey		
<p>CLOSED UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000</p>		
(Full Postal Address)		(Full Address, if Necessary)

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

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19/9
Mrs. P. McCLOSKEY

SS

7 September 1981

I enclose a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from Mrs. McCloskey, the mother of one of the Maze hunger strikers. I should be grateful if you could let me have a draft reply which the Prime Minister might send to Mrs. McCloskey. It would be helpful if your draft could reach me by Monday 14 September. You may think that, in present circumstances, the idea of a meeting between the Prime Minister and the mother of ~~the~~^a hunger striker is worthy of more serious consideration than might have been the case a month or two ago.

MA

Stephen Boys-Smith, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

SS

JS

7 September 1981

I am replying on the Prime Minister's behalf to your letter to her of 1 September. Your letter is receiving attention and a reply will be sent as soon as possible.

MA

Mrs. P. McCloskey

JS