

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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Long Kesh and Armagh prisoners' protest and hunger strikeBackground

1. The origins of the strike lie in the decision taken in November 1975 to phase out special category status as recommended by the Gardiner Report published that year. This meant that all persons convicted for offences after 1 March 1976 were to be subject to the ordinary prison regime. In March 1980 it was announced that no person charged on or after 1 April 1980 would be granted special category status, irrespective of date of offence. Since the first conviction under these arrangements (September 1976) a protest, initially in the form of a refusal to do prison work or wear prison clothing, has been undertaken. The prison authorities' response, up to recently, was to impose a strict regime which excluded all but statutory entitlements. The prisoners protesting by refusing to work or to wear prison clothing were allowed their statutory monthly visits and letters, normal meals, the use of toilets, normal medical facilities and exercise. Exercise was available, as required by the Prison Rules, provided that the prisoners put on prison clothes to take it (or, in suitable weather conditions, they were permitted to exercise in prison underwear or naked). Protesting prisoners also lose remission which can amount to 50%.

Escalation of Protest

2. Since March 1978 the protesting prisoners at Long Kesh have intensified their protest by refusing to clean their cells, to use the toilets or empty their slop buckets. They have damaged the contents and fittings of their cells, and smeared the walls and window frames in their cells and on the outside walls with excreta. They also broke up their beds and other cell furniture; since it was felt pieces of the beds and furniture could be used as weapons against prison officers, the prison authorities decided to remove the beds and all other furniture. Attempts by the prison authorities to reintroduce into the cells certain basic items of furniture have not met with any success and the items have been destroyed by the prisoners. Because of the absence of bed frames prisoners sleep on the floor on their mattresses. The cells which



the prisoners are fouling are cleaned by the prison authorities using specialised steam-cleaning equipment. Cells are cleaned about every two weeks but are fouled again almost immediately. The protestors have refused to use the washing facilities in their cell blocks, although most agree to be bathed in order to avail of medical treatment.

3. In addition to the cleaning of cells, the British authorities maintain that special measures have been taken to deal with the medical and public health aspects of the protest. So far, according to the British, there has been no evidence of illness, apart from minor skin conditions, caused by the protest conditions. This conforms with information we have received from independent sources.

#### British Government Concessions

4. The British Government have made several attempts to improve conditions in Long Kesh, while remaining firm on the question of special category status. In March 1980, they agreed to the wearing by prisoners, for recreational purposes, of regulation PT vests, shorts and plimsolls, and there was some alleviation of the conditions relating to visits and letters. In August, further concessions on compassionate leave, recreation and association were granted. While the protestors claim to have rejected these concessions it is known that they are availing of some of them, particularly extra visits and letters and compassionate leave. Full details of the prison regime applicable to conforming and protesting prisoners are in the attached Annex I.

#### Human Rights Aspects

5. Since the beginning of the protest there have been many allegations of ill-treatment of prisoners and of capricious and brutal enforcement of prison rules and regulations. On the basis of the information available to the Department from regular contacts with reliable sources in Northern Ireland, our assessment is that these complaints have often been exaggerated and are politically motivated to a large degree. While individual incidents do occur from time to time they appear to owe more to the highly charged



atmosphere within the prison than to a systematic administrative practice of brutality. It is the established practice of the Department that cases which are brought to our attention are raised with the British authorities with a request for views on the allegations made. The number of cases in which the Department has been asked to make enquiries is very few, amounting to no more than around a dozen. Since January 1980 no serious case of alleged ill-treatment of prisoners by prison staff has been brought to the notice of the Department by contacts who visit the prison on a regular basis.

6. In August 1978 applications were lodged with the European Commission of Human Rights at Strasbourg on behalf of four of the H-Blocks prisoners who alleged multiple breaches by the British Government of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Last October (1979) the Commission decided to communicate the complaints to the British Government. The complaints made referred, in general, to the conditions of their detention in the Maze Prison. They alleged that these were such that their rights under Articles 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights were violated. These Articles relate, respectively, to inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment, procedural rights in relation to disciplinary charges, rights to privacy, freedom of belief and conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of association, provision of effective national remedies and discrimination in treatment.

7. In June 1980 the European Commission on Human Rights ruled on complaints by four of the protesting prisoners. The ECHR found in its ruling that the right to a preferential status for a certain category of prisoner is not amongst the rights guaranteed by the Convention and observed that the prisoners who took their complaints to it are not entitled to the status of political prisoner under national law, or under the Convention or under the existing norms of international law. While rejecting the protestors' basic demands the ECHR in paragraphs 63 and 64 of the Report was nonetheless critical of the British Government's handling of the H-Block affair and expressed its concern at



"the inflexible approach of the (British) State authorities which has been concerned more to punish offenders against prison discipline than to explore ways of resolving such a serious deadlock".

A full text of paragraphs 63 and 64 is given in Annex 2.

8. Between March and September 1980 discussions took place between Cardinal Ó Fiaich and Bishop Daly of Derry with the N.I. Secretary of State in an attempt to break the H-Blocks deadlock. On the conclusion of the series of meetings in September, there was no agreement on measures to be taken to improve the situation. The NIO said however that the Cardinal's views were being given very careful consideration within the context of continuing prison reform but no reforms were announced at that time.

#### Hunger strike

9. While there had been talk on and off about the prospects of a hunger strike in Long Kesh there were no obvious signs that the protestors would proceed with such a course of action until October 1980. It was then indicated by the protestors that a hunger strike involving 7 prisoners would commence on October 27th in pursuit of the prisoners' demands. On October 24th in advance of the scheduled date of commencement of the hunger strike the British Government announced a further concession in Northern Ireland prison conditions. They announced that, in the context of continuing review of prison conditions, they had been considering for some time the requirement to wear prison uniform in Northern Ireland and had decided to abolish prison uniform and substitute civilian-type clothing. In reply to a question on this subject the British Prime Minister said:

"if a decision was to be made it seemed right to make it before the hunger strike started. It would have been wrong to make a decision while the hunger strike was being carried on" (House of Commons 28/10/80)



10. In advance of the formal announcement of this concession press reports had given rise to the expectation that prisoners would be permitted to wear their own clothes. The announcement of the provision of civilian-type clothing was rejected by the protestors and the hunger strike commenced on schedule despite last minute appeals from Cardinal Ó Fiaich and Bishop Daly

"to think again about the awful consequences which a mass hunger strike could bring on the whole community".

11. At the time the hunger strike was announced there were 340 prisoners on the dirty protest in Long Kesh and about the same number of republican prisoners who were not protesting. When the hunger strike began another 140 prisoners or so joined the dirty protest bringing the total number of dirty protestors to around 480 with 200 non-protestors. Some of the prisoners who have not joined the dirty protest are refusing to do prison work. At the end of September 1980 there were 387 special category prisoners in seven compounds in Long Kesh. The seven prisoners at present on hunger strike are:

- (i) Raymond McCartney (25), Derry City, serving 3 concurrent sentences including a life sentence for two murders and belonging to a proscribed organisation;
- (ii) Sean McKenna (26), born in Monaghan, living in Newry, serving 21 concurrent sentences of up to 25 years for a number of offences, including attempted murder, wounding with intent, causing explosions;
- (iii) Leo Green (27), Lurgan, Co. Armagh, serving 4 life sentences for murder, attempted murder, wounding with intent and possession of firearms;
- (iv) Thomas McKearney (26), Moy, Co. Tyrone, serving two life sentences for murder, possession of firearms and assault and a lesser sentence for assault; all sentences concurrent;
- (v) Thomas McFeeley (32), Claudy, Co. Derry, serving several sentences for, inter alia, robbery, possession and use of a firearm, and attempted wounding. (He was also among those who broke out of Portlaoise Prison in 1974 and was one of the applicants in the complaints made to the European Commission on Human Rights - see above).
- (vi) Brendan Hughes (32), is from Belfast and serving 15 years for several offences including possession of and handling stolen goods, and arms and explosives offences.



- (vii) John Nixon, Armagh, who is not a Provisional but a member of the IRSP/INLA and is serving two sentences of up to 14 years for armed robbery.

The strikers have in common the fact that they are all relatively young, serving long sentences and single (with one exception). It is the stated intention of the strike leaders to replace any of the seven who drop out of the strike or who die while on it.

12. On 7 November the prison authorities moved the strikers into single cells in a wing of the prison separate from the blocks occupied by the general body of the protesting prisoners. This was done to facilitate surveillance of their health. Since their removal all 7 have apparently been co-operating fully and have not disturbed their cells. Normally after 60 days serious weakness could be expected though total abstainers from food have been known to survive for up to 90-100 days. If no drink were taken death would supervene within 7 days.

13. The protestors are demanding

- "(i) the right not to wear prison uniform
- (ii) the right not to do prison work
- (iii) the right to associate freely with other political prisoners
- (iv) full remission of sentences
- (v) the right to a weekly visit, letter and parcel and the right to organise their own educational and recreational pursuits"

On 13 November 1980 a statement said to have been smuggled out from Long Kesh said that a concession on prison clothing alone would not solve the crisis. The text of the statement is as follows:

"We perceive these demands as a package and they are the minimum concessions which we will accept. Seemingly there are those who erroneously believe that a solution to the current H Block crisis hinges on the granting of civilian clothes to us. No such solitary concession would end our protest which is for political status".



### Armagh Jail Protest

14. A dirty protest similar to that in the H-Blocks, involving 32 Republican women prisoners, has developed in Armagh Prison. Women prisoners in Northern Ireland are permitted to wear their own clothes. Initially the protest in Armagh did not relate to a demand for special category status but to alleged violence against the prisoners on 7 February 1980 and to subsequent events. However, as the protest continued the H-Block protest and the Armagh protest became more closely aligned both in terms of the demands being made and the methodology of the protest (refusing to wash and dirtying of cells).

15. More recently, on 1 December 1980, 3 of the women prisoners commenced a hunger strike in support of the demand for political status. These women are:

- (i) Mairead Farrell (23), serving 14 years from 1976 having been convicted of explosives and membership offences
- (ii) Mary Doyle (24), serving 8 years for possessing incendiary devices
- (iii) Mairead Nugent (21), serving 25 years for attempting to bomb the house of a former Governor of Armagh Jail

16. Apart from those women on hunger strike the situation of the protesting women in Armagh Jail now appears to be as equally entrenched as in Long Kesh and there are indications that they are prepared to stay on this form of protest as long as necessary. A case by 4 of the Armagh women prisoners against prison officers for allegedly attacking them in February/March 1980 is due before the Courts in Northern Ireland shortly.

### Comparative Prison Regimes

17. The British authorities have been made fully aware of the regime that applies in the case of the prisoners in Portlaoise in the hope that it might help them in their approach to the H-Blocks problem. On investigation of the prison regime that applies in some European countries (Italy, FRG, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and France) all require prison work to be done and no country with the



exception of Denmark is normally prepared (see however note on France below) to permit prisoners to wear their own clothes. Most other countries do however appear to have a more relaxed attitude to the question of letters and visits than is the case in the H-Blocks.

18. With the exception of France no other European country recognises the concept of a politically motivated crime or accords special treatment to prisoners in this category. Generally speaking in France convicted prisoners claiming political motivation for their crime(s) would be tried under the Cour de Surete de l'Etat which was established in 1963 during the Algerian Emergency. Such convicted prisoners are entitled to the "regime special" the dispositions of which are as follows:

- (a) prisoners have the right to free association during the day
- (b) they have the right to receive visitors without a physical security barrier
- (c) they are not required to work
- (d) they have the right to wear their own clothes

19. The "regime special" has been applied to Breton and other regional groups, principally Corsicans and there are about 120 prisoners involved either awaiting trial or actually sentenced. The trial is in a non-jury court comprising normally a President assisted by 5 judges, a number of whom are army officers.

#### British Government policy on the hunger strike Public Statements

20. The British authorities issued a comprehensive statement of policy on 24 October 1980 and this policy has been reiterated in the House of Commons in the succeeding weeks. The British Government have stated that they:

"will not and cannot make any concessions whatever on the principle of political status for prisoners who claim a political motive for their crimes" (statement of 24/10/80)



that:

"there can be no question of any concession to those on hunger strike now that the hunger strike has begun and I sincerely hope that they will not persist in it".  
(Mrs. Thatcher 30/10/80 and also on 28/10/80)

that:

"we will not make any concession to blackmail and if they are fighting for a great issue of principle, as they see it political status, then they are banging their heads against a brick wall. But if they are in a muddled way saying that 'we want better prison conditions', then this is a different story. We have done a great deal along those lines already".  
(Mr. Alison, N.I. Minister of State, 24 November)

that:

"those hunger strikers have gone on hunger strike because they want political status. I have said, and will continue to say and will continue to hold firm, there is no such thing as political murder. I cannot interfere with a hunger strike. We do not force-feed. If those people continue with their hunger strike, it will have no effect whatsoever. It will just take their own lives, for which I will be profoundly sorry, because I think it's a ridiculous thing to do. I think it's a ridiculous way to try to go about it. Before the hunger strike started we had a look at the rules affecting all prisoners in Northern Ireland. And we decided that instead of wearing prison uniform they could in fact have an issue of civilian-type clothes, chosen by the Northern Irish authorities. That happens in a number of other countries; having said that I thought we got ourselves into a really good position and there will be, and can be, no concessions. That hunger strike will do no good at all. It will not achieve any objectives which help the people of Northern Ireland and I shall not move from my total belief and commitment that murder is murder and it is a criminal crime which these people choose to do and for which they are totally and utterly personally responsible".  
(Mrs. Thatcher BBC interview 26 November)

that:

"we agree with the European Commission of Human Rights that while there can be no question of their having political status, we should be ready nevertheless to deal with the humanitarian aspects of the conditions in the prisons arising from the protest. It is a matter of very great regret that changes made by the Government in response to the Commission have been rejected. We have always been and still are willing to discuss the humanitarian aspects of the prison administration in Northern Ireland with anyone who shares our concern about it.



The Government remains determined that, subject always to the requirements of security and within the resources available, the progress achieved in recent years in the administration of Northern Ireland prisons should be continued to meet the legitimate needs of all concerned".  
(Statement, 4 December 1980)

### Private Statements

22. In private discussions which have taken place with the British relating to the hunger strike they have shown themselves no less determined not to give in on the question of political status. Some of the indicators of British Government official thinking would appear to be:

- (i) they were considering whether flexibility on other demands of the strikers was feasible and felt that there was room for manoeuvre (Stowe, 7 November)
- (ii) the British Government was determined to maintain and improve prison conditions in a humanitarian way for all N.I. prisons and prisoners and that improvements would be carried out in the next 12 months (Brelloch, 17 November)
- (iii) political status seemed to mean prisoner of war status and as such was equivalent to the 5 demands as stated (Brelloch, 17 November)
- (iv) Prisoner of war status was out (Moriarty, 26 November)
- (v) a humane regime in the jails would be tried and many variables were possible (Wyatt, 17 November)
- (vi) it was premature to think in terms of mediation (Stowe, 17 November)
- (vii) there would never be any question of unsupervised "free association", that is association periods should always have to be controlled by the authorities and within the scope of what the prison authorities might permit (Moriarty, 26 November)
- (viii) something could be worked out which would allow the prisoners to spend work periods in occupations of their own choosing which might for official purposes be labelled as "work", but whatever they would do would have to be within the terms set by the prison authorities (Moriarty, 26 November)
- (ix) regarding clothing, letters and parcels, visits and restoration of remission in the context of general prison reform accommodation could in normal conditions be found (Moriarty, 26 November)



- (x) possibly 3½ of the 5 demands could eventually be conceded (Moriarty, 26 November)
- (xi) the British Government would be aiming not only at terminating the hunger strike but the dirty protest as well (Moriarty, 26 November)

#### Irish Government Policy

23. The Government have made two public statements in the Dáil on the question of the H-Blocks issue on 11 November and 25 November 1980. A copy of the reply of 25 November 1980 is attached at Annex 3. The Taoiseach was also in direct written personal communication with Mrs. Thatcher in advance of the hunger strike on 23 October 1980 indicating the Government's concern at the prospects of a hunger strike in the H-Blocks. A copy of the Taoiseach's letter to Mrs. Thatcher on 23 October is attached at Annex 4.

24. Following the British Government statement (Annex 5) on 4 December 1980 the Government issued a statement welcoming the inclusion in the statement of the British Government's willingness to discuss the humanitarian aspects of the prison administration in Northern Ireland with anyone who shares their concern about it. The Government statement expressed the hope that this offer would be taken up and pursued as a matter of urgency. The Government again indicated their readiness to give their support to any moves which would offer reasonable hope of achieving a solution. The full text of the Government statement is attached at Annex 6.

#### Department of Foreign Affairs

4 December 1980

#### Annexes:

1. Prisoners' Privileges in N.I.
2. Text of paragraphs 63 and 64 of ECHR Report
3. Taoiseach's Dáil reply, 25 November 1980
4. Personal letter from Taoiseach to British P.M. on 23 October 1980
5. British Government statement, 4 December 1980
6. Government statement, 4 December 1980



5 of the Prison Rules (Northern Ireland) 1954 requires that there is to be established in every prison in the interest of good conduct and training, system, or systems, of privileges. Protesting prisoners in Long Kesh have certain privileges which are normally allowed to sentenced prisoners. Statutory minimum requirements regarding such matters as exercise, visits and letters are laid down in the Prison Rules and these cannot be withdrawn by the prison authorities.

Rules for Conforming Prisoners

Letters

Statutory and seven additional letters out per month paid for by the prison: further letters at his expense. The receipt of letters in reasonable proportion to those sent.

Visits

Statutory and three additional visits a month.

Parcels

Weekly parcel of reading material, fruit and toilet articles. Special parcels at Christmas, Easter and Hallowe'en.

Clothing

A variety of civilian-type clothing supplied by the prison authorities. In addition non-prison clothing of an approved type may be worn for visits, and evening and week-end association.

Exercise

Use of the gymnasium and/or playing pitch for about three hours a week at exercise periods, in addition to normal exercise.

Association

Three hours' association every evening (to watch television, play indoor games, etc); there is also association during the day on Thursdays and Sundays.

Rules for Protesting Prisoners

One letter in and out a month (the letter out paid for by the prison). One additional letter in and out in lieu of the monthly statutory visit if this is not taken. Three additional privilege letters in and out a month permitted since March 1980.

One statutory and since March 1980 one privilege visit a month.

None.

A variety of civilian-type clothing supplied by the prison authorities. The alternative for certain purposes is to wear the underwear or part of the clothing provided. Towels may be worn inside the wings.

Not less than one hour's exercise per day in the open air, weather permitting. Protesting prisoners refuse to take this, although they may now use sportswear provided for the purpose. An hour's additional recreation (PT) has been on offer since September 1980; again sportswear is available.

Evening association has been offered on a limited basis since September 1980; each prisoner may expect to have one period of such association a week. (There are of course other occasions when association takes place - during work, dining and exercise periods, for example - but the protesters refuse these.)



### Newspapers and Reading Material

Access to newspapers supplied by the prison, also use of the prison library and books received in parcels.

A selection of books and newspapers are available in each Wing during weekdays and in the room where the prisoners attend Mass on Sundays. The protesting prisoners can collect a book or paper without putting on prison uniform.

### Use of Earnings

Prisoners may use their earnings from prison work and an equivalent amount of their own funds to make purchases in the prison tuck shop and elsewhere, up to £2.50 per week.

May not make purchases.

### Radio

Prisoners serving over 2 years may keep a personal radio set in their cells.

None.

### Home Leave

For certain classes of prisoners short periods of home leave are available at Christmas, in the summer, and towards the end of sentence. Short periods of compassionate leave may also be given in certain circumstances.

Home leave is not available but compassionate leave has been offered since August 1980, subject to the same conditions as apply to conforming prisoners.

### Remission

A prisoner serving a term of more than one month may be granted remission, on the ground of his good conduct, up to one-half of his sentence. Remission may be lost as a disciplinary award, but it is possible for this to be restored after subsequent good behaviour.

Protesting prisoners lose one day's remission for each day they are in breach of Prison Rules. Some protesting prisoners, who have subsequently abandoned the protest, have had lost remission restored.



Extract from the Report of the European Commission for Human Rights June 1980

63. However, it must have become clear to the prison authorities after a certain period that the applicants were not prepared to change their attitudes, to take exercise naked or to make use of prison facilities (such as the library or dining room) naked, or to wear prison uniform or underwear to see medical specialists. The result is that the applicants are confined to their cells on a permanent basis in conditions, though self-imposed, which must pose a significant threat to their physical and mental well-being.

64. No doubt the authorities consider that to make concessions to the applicants will result in strengthening their resolve to continue their protest to a successful conclusion. However, the Commission must express its concern at the inflexible approach of the State authorities which has been concerned more to punish offenders against prison discipline than to explore ways of resolving such a serious deadlock. Furthermore, the Commission is of the view that, for humanitarian reasons, efforts should have been made by the authorities to ensure that the applicants could avail of certain facilities such as taking regular exercise in the open air with some form of clothing (other than prison clothing) and making greater use of the prison amenities under similar conditions. At the same time, arrangements should have been made to enable the applicants to consult outside medical specialists even though they were not prepared to wear prison uniform or underwear.



QUESTION NO. 2.

DAIL QUESTION addressed to the Taoiseach by  
Deputy Frank Cluskey for answer on  
Tuesday, 25th November, 1980.

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QUESTION:

To ask the Taoiseach if the Government supports the demand of the H-Block prisoners that they be granted political status.

REPLY:

The Government have, over a long period, made known their concern about the humanitarian aspects of the H-Block situation.

They have been concerned also about the very real danger that the H-Block developments could lead to an even greater level of violence than we already have to endure in both parts of this country.

All of us will, I am sure, understand and sympathise with the anguish and distress of the parents and families of the prisoners involved and of all those who have suffered loss of life or injury as a result of the tragic situation in Northern Ireland.

Before the hunger strike began, the Government conveyed their concern to the British Government and their



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anxiety about the possible consequences. Since then, they have been keeping in close and continuous touch with the situation as it has developed.

Since the loss of personal liberty is, of itself, a heavy penalty imposed on any prisoner, there is an obligation on authorities everywhere to ensure that, within the constraints imposed by security needs, prison conditions are as humane and as tolerable as it is possible to make them. Like a number of other people who are concerned about this issue, the Government believe that, if some adjustments could be made in the prison rules themselves or in their interpretation or their application, a solution would be possible.

The Government do not believe that political status should be an issue. Their concern, and I believe this concern is shared by all members of the House, is to do anything they can to promote a solution so that more lives should not be needlessly lost. With this in view, the Government have indicated that they are ready to give their support to any initiative which would offer reasonable hope of achieving a solution, and to be of any help they can in order to avoid the grave consequences which could flow from the present dangerous situation.

/.....



3.

The Government believe that it is in the interests of the peace and security of all the people of this island that a way out of the present situation should be found. They further believe that an acceptable solution can be brought forward without the sacrifice of any principles which might be regarded as being involved.

On Monday, 27th October, I feel that I should make direct and private representations to you to convey my very deep and serious concern about the repercussions on our security situation of a longer strike and possible deaths.

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 smaller 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 request from the Government, the Irish security forces have agreed to their various and considered that a longer strike is a long time would be provided to subversives.



Message from the Taoiseach, Mr. Charles J. Haughey, T.D., to the

Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, M.P., Prime Minister.

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25/10/85 8

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.

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 very deep and serious concern about the repercussions on our security situation of a hunger strike and possible deaths.

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



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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 I.R.A. will fully exploit the propaganda potential of the hunger strike in the U.S. 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 Irish 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.