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Discussion between Minister Dooge and Lord Carrington,
and officials - Brussels - 13 July, 1981

1. The conversation began by the Minister saying that time was pressing and that he would dispense with pleasantries. In opening the discussion with Lord Carrington he was doing so on the basis of two conversations, the first long, the subsequent one more brief with the Taoiseach.

2. There were a number of specific points which he wished to make to Lord Carrington but before coming to these he would like to give some of the reasons behind them. Furthermore, the Minister suggested that given that Lord Carrington was pressed for time that perhaps Julian Bullard (the UK Political director) would remain behind so that the points made to Lord Carrington could be further amplified.

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3. It was the Minister's hope that Lord Carrington would listen to the points that he had to make, discuss them subsequently with the Secretary for State for Northern Ireland and that both should then in turn pass these on to the Prime Minister.

4. Carrington, in reply, said that since he was on his way to New York (for the Kampuchea Conference) he had no more than 16 hours in which to talk to the Prime Minister. The Minister in response said that the situation was so urgent we probably didn't have more than 16 hours within which to begin to come to grips with it.

5. The Minister then began his exposition proper by saying that every death in the Maze was a victory for the I.R.A. Particularly, since the death of Bobby Sands the hunger strike was providing a propaganda victory on a world wide scale for the Provisionals. There is a serious danger that the next death would be that of Kieran Doherty, who is a member of Parliament in the Republic, which will give a further impetus to the propaganda victories being enjoyed by the I.R.A.

6. With the way in which the situation is developing currently it is no longer a matter of relevance simply to Northern Ireland or to relations between the UK and Ireland. The growth of world-wide sympathy for the I.R.A. in consequence of the hunger strike will lead to an internationalisation of the problem. Moreover, there is now^a serious danger that the problem will indeed get out of control. This makes it doubly urgent that Lord Carrington should act before he leaves for America by bringing our concerns to the attention of the Prime Minister.

7. Carrington did not demur but asked if we had specific proposals or requests. The Minister in response said that he would like to refer first to the Taoiseach's letter to Mrs. Thatcher. We would wish that Mrs. Thatcher should give a prompt and a considered reply. Carrington interjected to say that he had seen the letter.

8. Secondly, we believe that the UK Government should deal directly with the prisoners. It was not our intention to try to tell the UK what to do in detail. Nonetheless, we feel that direct talks are now the only thing which can lead to a resolution. The second conversation (which the Minister had referred to earlier with the Taoiseach) related to a further rule for the European Commission for Human Rights.

9. The Government considers that there is a possibility of a renewed role for the H/R Commission but not as an intermediary, since the Commission's procedures were altogether too bureaucratic and slow to meet the urgency of the present situation.

10. However, the Irish Government felt that the European Commission for Human Rights could have a valuable role to play after a settlement. What we had in mind was that the Commission could play a part in 'monitoring' the implementation of a settlement, we hesitated to use the word guarantor.

11. With regard to the possibility of a settlement, the Government believed that the basis for this reposed in the statement made last week by the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace. This was the kind of flexible approach which would make a settlement possible without sacrifice of principle and which would enable the prisoners to give up their fast and ignore the I.R.A.

12. The Minister went on to say that the UK Government may reply that if they were to respond to this kind of proposal they would simply be induced to make a concession which would lead to the kind of outcome that occurred in December last, when, after a short respite and amid confusion and muddle the hunger strike resumed.

13. The Monitoring role suggested for the European Commission of Human Rights could serve to prevent this happening - if a settlement could be reached to the current hunger strike. Since the Human Rights Commission had kept open the McFealy case, we feel they are thus in a position to play the monitoring role we have in mind.

14. The Minister went on to say with regard to situation in the Maze itself, there were a number of options:

- First, one could stand still and let the Hunger strike continue in the hope that the prisoners would give up.
This course could be potentially disastrous.
- Secondly, one could try to get back on the course of an agreed settlement - which early last week we felt was possible.

At that time, the prisoners were to a significant extent outside the control of the I.R.A.. It is not the case that all of the statements issued by the I.R.A. on behalf of the prisoners genuinely reflect the latter's state of mind.

- But each death and the prisoners reactions to deaths tend to push the prisoners back under the I.R.A.'s control

15. There was no point in rehearsing the events which lead to the breakdown in the settlement efforts last week. These had been recounted in detail in London on Friday last. However if we are to avoid serious damage to the interests of our two governments, we feel that it is necessary now to get back on course towards a settlement

16. In summary our recommendations were:

(i) Deal directly with the prisoners. We don't say negotiate. We fully accept and respect the UK's refusal to concede 'special status' or 'political status', and we are in no way asking for this. Nor are we asking the UK to abandon the principle that HMS's prisons should be under the control of Her Majesty's prison officers and no one else.

(ii) We are not trying to spell out in detail what you should do.

(iii) We feel that there is still a role for the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace.

[At this point the ICJP statement to the effect that they still envisaged a passive role for the Commission was explained]

(iv) Finally - as to the role of the European Commission of Human Rights, we saw this too as a possibility but after a settlement had been reached.

[A further note ^{the} on conversation with Julian Bullard to follow]

Patricia MacKernan

cc PSM
PSS

PN. MacKernan

Mr. Neligan

Brussels 13 July 1981

Attached are Minister's notes for