



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2021/44/96
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Sec 7.1

cc A/Sec Gallagher ✓  
M. Collins ✓  
+ P.A.

Confidential FAX

31 May 1990

To Belfast  
For P. Collins

from HQ  
From B. McMahon

Crumlin Road Prison

There is increasing concern being expressed in responsible quarters at the deteriorating situation in Crumlin Road Prison.

For your own information, I understand from reliable sources that two attempts were made in recent days to try to sort out the problem. Both attempts were effectively designed to reduce the number of inmates in the prison - presumably to provide for increased room for manoeuvre on the part of the prison administration in addressing the current problem. Both attempts however apparently failed -viz-

- The first attempt was to move the younger prisoners to the Young Offenders Centre at Hydebank. However, this did not prove possible owing to the low security at Hydebank and an apparent inability on the part of the Prison Authorities to install additional security features at Hydebank within any reasonable time-frame.
- The second proposal was to transfer some prisoners to the Maze. However, it was apparently felt that to mix prisoners from Crumlin Road (which operates under the relatively stricter "Belfast Rules" of security) to the Maze, which has its own more relaxed system of rules developed over many years, would run the risk of destabilising the situation in the Maze.

Both these possible avenues for addressing the problem appear to have been closed off and our information suggests that the situation in Crumlin Road remains largely unchanged from the situation outlined in my report of 1 May 1990 -viz-

- The combative style of the Governor and some of the Assistant Governors is still being blamed by knowledgeable observers for allowing the situation within the prison to apparently spin out of control.
- I understand that the pattern of issuing severe punishments for minor infractions of prison rules continues.
- The influx of senior UDA figures in the aftermath of Stevens has not helped matters and there is considerable resentment among prisoners on both side that they are being forced to live adjacent to their enemies. (In one incident, I

understand that one Provo prisoner, Branniffe, was until recently in a cell close to the cell of the loyalist accused with the recent murder of Branniffe's father.)

- The present situation has apparently resulted in prisoners being locked up for much of the day on each alternate day when facilities on the wing are being made available to prisoners from the opposite side.

Grateful if you could raise the issue with the other side and seek a briefing as to how they see the situation being resolved. [In that context, you will wish to be aware that proposals have apparently been made for "separation" as opposed to "segregation" of prisoners. In other words a formula which would allow for de facto separation without any of the connotations associated with segregation, a word which implies O.C.'s and paramilitary control of the prison etc.]

In discussing the matter with the other side, you might mention our concern regarding recent loyalist attacks on prison officers and now, more recently, the threat of similar action on the part of the IRA.

As regards the problem itself, we appreciate that the attempted breakout last October required additional security measures to be implemented and, while we understand their opposition to the principle of segregation and their view that the current situation is being manipulated by the paramilitaries, nonetheless you might wish to tease out whether any pragmatic rearrangement within the prison might help in taking the heat out of the present situation, and whether any such arrangements are being contemplated.

It would also I think be appropriate at this stage to mention that our information suggests that many of the problems might have been nipped in the bud with a change in the current style of management within the prison and that many of the problems appear to have originated with, and to have been exacerbated by, the strict enforcement of petty rules within the prison.