

IMMEDIATE

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CABINET OFFICE - SIR R ARMSTRONG
DIO

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SIR K STOWE

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~~RESIDENT CLERK~~

RR N I O(B)

GRS 300

IMMEDIATE

CONFIDENTIAL

FM DUBLIN 10/1100Z OCT 1980

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 277 OF 10 OCT

AND TO ROUTINE INFO N I O(BELFAST)

POSSIBLE HUNGER STRIKE IN H-BLOCK

1. MR LENIHAN ASKED ME TO CALL THIS MORNING TO EXPRESS THE CONCERN OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT AT POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN MAZE AND OTHER PRISONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN.

2. THEY HAD HEARD THAT THERE WERE PLANS FOR A HUNGER STRIKE TO START ON MONDAY, 20 OCTOBER. THEIR INFORMATION WAS THAT SEVERAL SINGLE MEN WITH NO DEPENDENTS KNOWN FOR THEIR RESOLUTION HAD BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE STRIKE. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECT THIS MIGHT HAVE ON THE EXISTING EXCELLENT SECURITY COOPERATION ON THE BORDER. AT THE MOMENT IRISH PUBLIC OPINION SEEMED TO BE MORE OR LESS BEHIND THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS INCREASED CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TERRORISTS. BUT A HUNGER STRIKE COULD BE

PIRA have now announced that the hunger strike will begin on Monday, 20 October. One might expect the first deaths to occur about Christmas if the 'strikers' resolution holds + no solution is found.

And

BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE STRIKE. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECT THIS MIGHT HAVE ON THE EXISTING EXCELLENT SECURITY COOPERATION ON THE BORDER. AT THE MOMENT IRISH PUBLIC OPINION SEEMED TO BE MORE OR LESS BEHIND THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS INCREASED CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TERRORISTS. BUT A HUNGER STRIKE COULD BE SO EMOTIVE THAT THE PUBLIC MOOD COULD CHANGE AND PUT AT RISK THE PRESENT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SECURITY COOPERATION.

3. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT FULLY ACCEPTED THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF US GRANTING POLITICAL STATUS BUT THEY WISHED TO URGE US TO TAKE A FRESH, HARD LOOK AT THE WAY WE WERE COPING WITH THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN OF PROTEST. SURELY SOMETHING COULD BE DONE ON THE ISSUES OF CLOTHING AND WORK WHICH WOULD HEAD OFF A HUNGER STRIKE.

4. I REPLIED THAT WE WERE FULLY CONSCIOUS OF THE DANGER OF THIS PROBLEM AND THAT WE HAD BEEN WORKING HARD TO TRY TO FIND A SOLUTION. AS HE KNEW, AN N I O OFFICIAL HAD VISITED DUBLIN THIS WEEK TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF CLOTHING AND WORK WITH DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICIALS.

5. MR LENIHAN IS RIGHT IN SAYING THAT THE PRESENT PUBLIC MOOD IS PRETTY SOLIDLY BEHIND CROSS BORDER SECURITY COOPERATION. IT IS DIFFICULT TO FORECAST WHAT EFFECT A PROLONGED HUNGER STRIKE MIGHT HAVE BUT I AM NOT SURPRISED THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE QUITE WORRIED.

6. MR LENIHAN WILL BE RAISING THE MATTER WITH MR ATKINS ON MONDAY.

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IMMEDIATE

CCN FOR LINE NINE PARA TWO PLEASE IGNORE "ESO"

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