

GROUPS 320

SECRET

SECRET

FROM DUBLIN 171014Z JUNE 1981  
TO IMMEDIATE F C O  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 199 OF 17 JUNE  
AND TO IMMEDIATE N I O (BELFAST)

A. 5

HUNGER STRIKE

1. IN MY TELNO 184 OF 4 JUNE I SAID THAT I HOPED WE COULD ANNOUNCE SOME INITIATIVE SHORTLY AFTER THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT IN DUBLIN. IT NOW SEEMS THAT A NEW GOVERNMENT CAN HARDLY BE FORMED UNTIL AFTER THE DAIL MEETS ON 30 JUNE. SO WE HAVE A LITTLE MORE TIME THAN WE EXPECTED.

2. I PAID A BRIEF VISIT TO N I O BELFAST YESTERDAY AND LEARNED OF THE NEW SUBMISSION ABOUT A PRISON REVIEW. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND ON WHOM I CALLED KINDLY ASKED ME FOR MY COMMENTS. I SAID I THOUGHT THE MOOD IN THE REPUBLIC ABOUT THE HUNGER STRIKE WAS HARDENING AGAINST US FOLLOWING THE SURPRISINGLY HIGH VOTE FOR THE H-BLOCK COMMITTEES CANDIDATES IN THE RECENT ELECTIONS. THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF THE MATTER ARE BEGINNING TO BE OBSCURED HERE BY THE FEAR THAT WE ARE PERHAPS ALLOWING THE STRIKE TO GET OUT OF CONTROL AND FAILING TO RECOGNIZE OR COUNTER ITS DANGEROUS SIDE EFFECTS - POLARISATION IN THE NORTH AND HOSTILITY TO BRITAIN AND POSSIBLE TURBULENCE IN THE SOUTH. BEFORE THE ELECTION IT WAS HOPED THAT OUR OPEN AND ENLIGHTENED ATTITUDE TO MOVES BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD - IF NOT RESOLVE THE QUESTION - AT LEAST ISOLATE THE PROVISIONALS FROM THEIR "HUMANITARIAN" FELLOW TRAVELLERS (WHO ARE NOW CLEARLY MORE NUMEROUS THAN WE THOUGHT AND WHOSE NUMBERS ARE STILL GROWING). THE E C H R INITIATIVE IS NOW SEEN TO HAVE RUN INTO THE SAND. WHAT I THINK IS WANTED IS SOME NEW WAY OF DRAWING IN RESPECTABLE AND WELL-KNOWN FOREIGNERS, PERHAPS FROM WITHIN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, IN ANY NEW INITIATIVE WE MAY CONTEMPLATE. THE PROPOSED PRISON REVIEW MIGHT BE A CONVENIENT WAY OF DOING THIS.

3. IN THE PRESENT EMOTIONAL STATE GENERATED BY THE HUNGER STRIKE DEATHS, WE MUST TRY AND GET OUT OF OUR PRESENT DIFFICULTY WHEREBY IRISH MEN ARE SEEN TO DIE IN BRITISH PRISONS AND THE BRITISH CAN'T OR DON'T WANT TO STOP THEM. A REVIEW IN WHICH WELL-KNOWN FOREIGN LEGAL LUMINARIES PARTICIPATED WOULD HELP INTERNATIONALISE OUR DIFFICULTIES AND, PROVIDED OF COURSE THAT THE FOREIGNERS PLAYED THEIR PROPER PART, MIGHT AT LAST TURN THE TIDE IN OUR FAVOUR.

Figg

NORTHERN IRELAND LIMITED

RID  
NAD  
INFORMATION DEPT  
WED  
MAED  
NEWS DEPT  
SECURITY DEPT  
PUSD  
PS  
PS/LPS  
PS/MR HURD

PS/MR RIDLEY  
PS/MR BLAKER  
PS/PUS  
SIR A ACLAND  
CHIEF CLERK  
MR ADAMS  
MR BULLARD  
MR FERGUSSON  
LORD N G LENNOX  
MR BRAITHEWAITE

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION  
NORTHERN IRELAND

SECRET