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OO WASHINGTON  
OO BIS NEW YORK  
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FM FCO 151700Z MAY 1981  
TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 745 OF 15 MAY  
INFO IMMEDIATE BIS NEW YORK, CONSULATE-GENERAL NEW YORK.  
FOR AMBASSADOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND

1. MIPT: TEXT OF PROPOSED LETTER IS AS FOLLOWS:-  
BEGINS

'I WONDER WHETHER I COULD COMMENT ON YOUR  
EDITORIAL OF 6 MAY ON NORTHERN IRELAND IN  
WHICH YOU CALLED ON MY GOVERNMENT TO TAKE  
ACTION IN A NUMBER OF AREAS. I WELCOME  
YOUR SUPPORT FOR MY GOVERNMENT'S DECISION  
NOT TO GRANT POLITICAL STATUS TO  
PROTESTING PRISONERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND,  
BUT I AM CONCERNED THAT YOUR PROPOSALS  
REFLECT AN IMPERFECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE  
POSITION IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND MY  
GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES THERE.  
MY GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO THE MAINTENANCE  
OF A HUMANE PRISON SYSTEM IN NORTHERN  
IRELAND. ACCORDINGLY, THE REGULATIONS AND  
CONDITIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND PRISONS ARE  
REVIEWED REGULARLY. IN RECENT MONTHS WE  
HAVE INTRODUCED A NUMBER OF CHANGES. FOR  
EXAMPLE, DURING THE COURSE OF 1980  
PROTESTING PRISONERS WERE OFFERED, WHETHER  
OR NOT THEY ENDED THEIR PROTEST, A RANGE OF  
IMPROVED CONDITIONS IN CONNECTION WITH  
LETTERS, VISITS, RECREATION, ASSOCIATION  
AND COMPASSIONATE LEAVE. IN OCTOBER LAST

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YEAR THE GOVERNMENT ENDED PRISON UNIFORM AS SUCH AND REPLACED IT WITH CIVILIAN-TYPE CLOTHING ISSUED BY THE PRISON AUTHORITIES. PRISONERS CAN WEAR THEIR OWN CLOTHES OUTSIDE WORKING HOURS AND AT WEEKENDS.

FURTHER CHANGES MIGHT BE INTRODUCED IN DUE COURSE, BUT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO RESPOND TO BLACKMAIL AND ANY CHANGES WHICH ARE MADE AS OUR PRISONS POLICY DEVELOPS MUST APPLY TO ALL PRISONERS.

2. SUCCESSIVE UK GOVERNMENTS IN RECENT YEARS HAVE MADE IT WHOLLY CLEAR THAT HUNGER STRIKERS WILL NOT BE FORCE-FED. THIS POLICY IS IN LINE WITH THE 'GUIDELINES FOR MEDICAL DOCTORS CONCERNING TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT IN RELATION TO DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT' (THE TOKYO DECLARATION) ADOPTED BY THE 29TH WORLD MEDICAL ASSEMBLY IN TOKYO IN 1975. WE VERY MUCH REGRET THE DEATH OF ANY PRISONER BY HUNGER STRIKE. SUCH DEATHS ARE NEEDLESS AND SERVE ONLY TO INCREASE THE VERY TENSIONS WHICH THE GOVERNMENT AND ALL RESPONSIBLE OPINION WISH TO REDUCE. BUT WE BELIEVE IT WRONG IN PRINCIPLE TO FORCE-FEED A PRISONER WHO, IN THE WORDS OF THE TOKYO DECLARATION, HAS FORMED 'AN UNIMPAIRED AND RATIONAL JUDGMENT' OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF REFUSING NOURISHMENT.
3. IN DISCHARGING THEIR DUTIES, THE COURTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND OPERATE ACCORDING TO THE LAW WHICH APPLIES EQUALLY TO ALL CITIZENS IRRESPECTIVE OF PARA-MILITARY OR ANY OTHER AFFILIATION. SIMILARLY, THE PRISON AUTHORITIES

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OPERATE UNDER THE PRISON RULES WHICH APPLY TO ALL PRISONERS. THERE IS NO QUESTION OF HARSHER TREATMENT FOR THOSE CLAIMING MEMBERSHIP OF CERTAIN FACTIONS.

4. MY GOVERNMENT WOULD BE UTTERLY OPPOSED TO ANY ALLIANCE, COVERT OR OTHERWISE, BETWEEN ANY EXTREMIST PARA-MILITARY GROUPS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMY AND THE POLICE. ANY SUCH ACTIVITY WOULD BE DEALT WITH SEVERELY.
5. THE POSITION OF ALL SO-CALLED PARA-MILITARY GROUPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND IS KEPT UNDER CAREFUL REVIEW. THE ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE AND THE ULSTER FREEDOM FIGHTERS, FOR EXAMPLE, WHO CLAIM TO BE 'LOYALISTS' ARE PROSCRIBED ORGANISATIONS LIKE THE PROVISIONAL IRA. THE HOLDING OF AN ILLEGAL FIREARM BY ANY PERSON IS A SERIOUS CRIMINAL OFFENCE FOR WHICH HEAVY PENALTIES ARE IMPOSED, IRRESPECTIVE OF THE AFFILIATION OF THE OFFENDER.
6. WE ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL THE CITIZENS OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND HAVE TAKEN A NUMBER OF STEPS TO THAT END. FOR EXAMPLE, THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTITUTION ACT 1973 INTRODUCED NEW SAFEGUARDS MAKING IT UNLAWFUL FOR CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND STATUTORY BODIES THERE TO DISCRIMINATE ON RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL GROUNDS. THAT ACT ALSO SET UP AN INDEPENDENT STANDING ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH EXAMINES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LAW IN PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION AND RECOMMENDS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE CHANGES WHICH THEY



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CONSIDER NECESSARY. IN 1977, THE COMMISSION PUBLISHED A REPORT IN WHICH IT STRESSED THAT 'THE EXISTING BODY OF LAW IN NORTHERN IRELAND DESIGNED TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS IS IMPRESSIVE AND SHOULD NOT BE UNDER-RATED'. THE FAIR EMPLOYMENT ACT 1976 OUTLAWS POLITICAL OR RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IN PRIVATE AS WELL AS PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND SET UP A FAIR EMPLOYMENT AGENCY TO PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY. AN INDEPENDENT POLICE COMPLAINTS BOARD WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1979 TO STRENGTHEN THE INDEPENDENT CONSIDERATION OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE. THE MEMBERS OF EACH OF THESE BODIES ARE DRAWN FROM ALL SECTIONS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY. I SHOULD ALSO MENTION THAT WE HAVE A PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND WHO INVESTIGATES COMPLAINTS OF MAL-ADMINISTRATION, INCLUDING DISCRIMINATION, AGAINST NORTHERN IRELAND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND A COMMISSIONER FOR COMPLAINTS WHO DEALS WITH SIMILAR GRIEVANCES AGAINST LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND PUBLIC BODIES.

7. RELATIONS BETWEEN HMG AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC ARE GOOD: WE WANT TO DEVELOP THAT RELATIONSHIP POSITIVELY TO THE BENEFIT OF ALL. TO THIS END, MRS THATCHER AND MR HAUGHEY HAVE SET IN HAND A PROGRAMME OF JOINT STUDIES EMBRACING A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES FOR MUTUAL CONCERN. WE NATURALLY ACCEPT THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND WATCHES DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND WITH INTEREST BUT NORTHERN IRELAND'S FUTURE CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS MUST BE A MATTER

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FOR THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND, HER  
MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT AND THE UNITED KINGDOM  
PARLIAMENT. TO PROCEED ON ANY OTHER BASIS  
WOULD NOT ONLY BE WRONG IN PRINCIPLE, BUT  
WOULD NOT BRING THE PEACE AND STABILITY WHICH  
WE AND ALL THOSE GENUINELY CONCERNED FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND'S FUTURE EARNESTLY SEEK.'

ENDS.

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FM FCO 151630Z MAY 1981

TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

TELEGRAM NUMBER 744 OF 15 MAY

INFO IMMEDIATE BIS NEW YORK, CONSULATE-GENERAL NEW YORK.  
FOR AMBASSADOR

NORTHERN IRELAND

1. MIFT CONTAINS THE TEXT OF A DRAFT LETTER FROM YOU TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'NEW YORK DAILY NEWS', COMMENTING ON HIS EDITORIAL OF 6 MAY. IT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, WHO WOULD LIKE ALL THE SEVEN POINTS MADE IN THE EDITORIAL ANSWERED ALONG THE LINES OF THE DRAFT.
2. IF YOU SEE NO OBJECTION, WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU OR A SENIOR MEMBER OF YOUR STAFF COULD REPLY AS SUGGESTED WITH ANY STYLISTIC CHANGES YOU WISH.

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