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29 April 1981

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Hon Humphrey Atkins MP, today met Father John Magee who is visiting Northern Ireland as a personal representative of His Holiness the Pope.

The Secretary of State met Father Magee at Father Magee's request and on the clear understanding that the Government's position in relation to the hunger strike would not be subject to change or a matter for negotiation.

The Secretary of State outlined to Father Magee the many improvements in the prison regime which had been introduced over a considerable period on humanitarian grounds. He pointed out that conditions within HM Prison Maze were among the most modern existing in the world and that it was the Government's intention to continue to improve those conditions where appropriate.