

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Misc.  
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Uimhir.....

To: An Taoiseach

21st July 1981.

From: Liam Hourican

MEMO  
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On reflection, I am concerned about the decisions taken this morning regarding our possible reactions in the event that Mr. Doherty dies before a British official has gone into the prison. I feel that the publication of a detailed chronology of our efforts to end the strike, or even the extensive use of such a chronology for background briefing could be counterproductive.

If used on its own (i.e. without overt diplomatic action, or without a strong public statement from the Taoiseach or the Foreign Minister), it might serve merely to illustrate the extent of our failure to influence the British Government.

The more activity we point to over the past fortnight, the more remarkable will seem our inability to change the British approach. If then the chronology is revealed without accompanying action or political comment, we may find ourselves in a weak position. We will seem to have expended massive effort without effect.

Moreover, by "opening the books", while eschewing further action (even for the moment) we will be seen to be closing the incident and declaring ourselves to be losers on a grand scale.

I suggest therefore that any disclosure of our actions over the past fortnight should be accompanied by a strong, unapologetic assertion of the rightness of our point of view, and the error of the British position.

Precisely because our words have gone unheeded they should now become public and insistent. To do less will be to appear to accept defeat, and this I suggest we cannot afford.

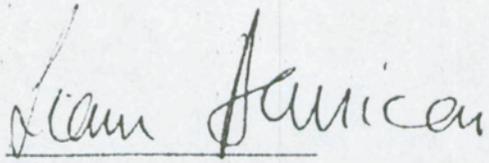
I appreciate there are compelling reasons for the postponement of diplomatic action. Pending such action, however, the line needs to be held by means of a strong statement criticising Britain's handling of the whole affair, not just from the time of the Government's first public involvement, but from the beginning of the ICJP initiative.

As to the most recent British excuses for not going in, they should, I feel be condemned as unacceptable. By listening - through the Governor - to McFarlane's conditions for a meeting, and then refusing those conditions, the Government is in effect negotiating with the prisoners. It is, at least, responding to conditions imposed by the prisoners.

It is quite possible that McFarlane is misrepresenting the views of the Hunger Strikers, but apart from that the British Government again shows bad faith towards us by treating McFarlane's conditions as more compelling than our demands. There is nothing to prevent the British now ignoring any difficulties thrown up by the prisoners or their spokesmen, and going into the prison to explain what is on offer in the event of the Hunger Strike ending. By acceding to McFarlane's pressure they are in effect giving a stronger role to Sinn Fein than to the Irish Government.

Regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Liam Hourican". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

LIAM HOURICAN

Government Press  
Secretary

C.C.  
Mr. Nally  
Mr. Neligan  
Prof. Dooge  
Mr. Lillis  
Mr. Kirwan