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① Mr Bell 55/9
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MR BLELLOCH - M. DESK BY 3 PM

cc Mr W E Bell - M
Mr Marshall
Mr Moriarty
Mr Wyatt - M
Mr Abbott
Mr Hopkins (L&B) - M
Miss Wright (L&B) - M

ANGLO-FRENCH SUMMIT

I attach, in final draft form, the NIO brief for this meeting, which has now gone across to Cabinet Office.

On the point about the parallel with Corsica, PUS believes we should leave this for the PM to originate if she sees fit.

P L Smith

R L SMITH
PS/PUS

4 September 1981

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STORMONT HOUSE ANNEX

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ANGLO-FRENCH SUMMIT
10-11 SEPTEMBER 1981

NORTHERN IRELAND

Brief by the Northern Ireland Office

Points to Make

1. We feel some concern about the efforts being made by the Provisional IRA and others close to them to secure support for their cause in influential circles in France. We are aware that these activities are putting pressure on the French Government in relation to the hunger strikes in Northern Ireland and are grateful for its restraint in not commenting on recent developments there. Nevertheless, we are anxious that the true position should be fully understood in France.
2. We have done a great deal to bring the hunger strikes to an end but cannot concede the prisoners' demands which, if granted, would give effective control in Northern Ireland prisons to the prisoners, something which no responsible Government could accept. Moreover, conceding the "five demands" would enable the prisoners to claim that they had been given political/prisoner of war status.
3. We have made a number of important changes for all prisoners on humanitarian grounds and we hope to improve further the already very high standards in Northern Ireland prisons.

4. HMG has nothing to hide. So far this year we have facilitated visits by, among others, the European Commission of Human Rights, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, the Pope's personal representative and members of the Irish and European Parliaments, as well as the media from home and abroad.

Background (Note: information which should not be disclosed is sidelined).

1. In recent months PIRA and other hunger strike supporters have devoted a good deal of effort to the promotion of their cause in influential - including governmental - circles in France. President Mitterrand's Government has come under steady pressure both from within the Socialist Party and from the French Left generally to take a public stand on the hunger strikes which is critical of HMG. Although individual socialist parliamentarians have criticised HMG's handling of the hunger strikes, the French Government's position so far has been that Northern Ireland is an internal UK matter. But in view of these pressures and since the French Government's restraint is based less on conviction than on their perception of the consequences for Anglo-French relations, it would be sensible for the Prime Minister to reinforce this perception with the President. Moreover, there have been indications that some of the President's senior colleagues - and perhaps the President himself - have some sympathy for the prisons protest. At the beginning of July the mother of Kieran Doherty (one of the hunger strikers who has died and by then a member of the Dail) and Father Dennis Faul who is close to the Provisionals were received by members of the French Prime Minister's cabinet. On 31 July three French Socialist Parliamentarians went to

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Northern Ireland hoping to see prisoners on hunger strike. They were not allowed into the prison but were given a briefing by NIO officials.

2. During his meeting with Sir Robert Armstrong on 20 August, the Secretary General to the Presidency (M. Beregovoy) explained that the deaths of the hunger strikers were a highly emotional issue to which French public opinion was very sensitive. Both the President and Mme. Mitterrand were receiving many letters on the subject. Speaking personally, M. Beregovoy hoped that HMG would do all that it could to bring the hunger strikes to an early end; and he made it clear that in his view that did not exclude conceding the five demands. The campaign in France is mainly communist inspired and is well organised; the main manifestations have been demonstrations and petitions and letters. There have been a few violent incidents but none of significance. The Paris Embassy has countered hostile propaganda through correspondence and by securing publication of articles putting HMG's point of view. During July two Northern Ireland Ministers explained the Government's case during visits to France. Every opportunity had been taken to brief French journalists and TV crews in London and Belfast.

5. There has been speculation that the Irish Government might have lobbied the French Government on the hunger strike; and that President Mitterrand might have cleared his lines with Dr FitzGerald before attending the Prince of Wales' Wedding. This speculation appears to be without foundation.

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

3 September 1981

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