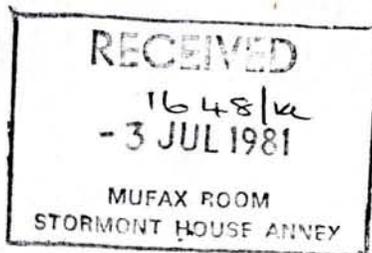


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c.c. PS/S of S (B)
PS/Mr. Alison (L&B) - M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
Mr. Wyatt - M
Mr. Moriarty
Mr. Jackson - M
Mr. Harrington
Mr. Chesterton
Mr. Blatherwick - M
Mr. Evers (FCO)

VICE PRESIDENT BUSH

... In response to your request of 26 June, I attach a draft of a personal letter which the Secretary of State might send to Vice President Bush in Washington.

I understand that the normal drill would be for you to forward the letter, via the FCO bag, to the Ambassador in Washington "under flying seal", so that he might send it on unless he saw grave objection to doing so.

J. A. MARSHALL
3 July 1981

Mr. Tompkins Mr. Dabell
ATTN
6.7.81

The draft is to
some extent outdated by
the PSF statement on Friday.

SCJ
6.7.81

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26 JUL 1981

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE

To	Enclosures	Copies to be sent to
Vice-President Bush	statement	
(Full Postal Address)		(Full Address, if Necessary)

LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY

SECRETARY OF STATE

(Name of Signatory)

I was delighted to have the opportunity of meeting you last week. I undertook then to write to you about the British Government's main concerns in Northern Ireland. [You kindly undertook to ensure that this letter was passed to President Reagan.]

Our policy on Northern Ireland is both pragmatic and founded on certain principles. It is pragmatic in that we deal with the existing situation as it is, not as it might have been had past history been different. Ireland is partitioned, and has been for 60 years. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. The two sides of the community in the North are divided in their political aspirations. Had the politicians of 60 - or even 100 - years ago behaved differently, the situation could well be different today; but we have to begin with things as they are now. Our policy is founded on principle in that we seek to be even-handed and just in our attitude to the 1½ million UK citizens who live in the Province. We fully understand the desire of those who look to the hope of a united Ireland, an aspiration which they are free to pursue by all the legitimate means available in a free and democratic society.

Equally, we understand the feelings of the majority who cling tenaciously to their connection with Britain and the Crown. We are

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not prepared, against the will of that majority, to move towards Irish unity. This is no more than a simple recognition of the political facts of life in Northern Ireland. Self-determination is a widely accepted concept. Change in the status of Northern Ireland needs the consent of its inhabitants. Nor does the British Government believe it to be part of its proper role to try to persuade 1 million of its Northern Ireland citizens that they should become citizens of another country. It is for those who espouse that cause - in Northern Ireland or outside - to persuade the unionists there that unity with the Republic of Ireland would be in their best interests.

Some, I know, see this as unduly protecting and favouring the position of the Protestant population. I would not accept that view. Our even-handedness is clearly demonstrated by our refusal over the last nine years to set up any kind of devolved administration in Northern Ireland which does not have the acceptance of the Catholic minority. The experiment of a power-sharing Executive in 1974 was brought to an early end by extreme Protestant opposition. The unionists would like us to revive the devolved system - with a permanent unionist majority - which prevailed for 50 years before 1972; but that we will not do, since it would be totally unacceptable to the Catholics. Any system must protect the position of the Catholics, and we are not prepared to return them to a continuing Protestant domination. Hence the conclusion, which I expounded in the House of Commons on 2 July, that in the absence of agreement among the local political parties we could not devolve executive or legislative powers, but would seek to involve Ulstermen in responsibility for the Province's affairs by setting up an Advisory Council. I enclose a copy of the relevant extract from my speech which provides a fuller statement of what we are proposing.

I know there is also deep concern in the US about the hunger strikers in the Maze prison, and the increased tension and violence arising from their deaths. It is sometimes alleged that the British Government is letting men die just for want of a readiness to make minor amendments in prison conditions. This is a gross distortion of the true situation. First, the strikers have repeatedly stated that what they want is "political status" as embodied in five

demands, which add up to a recognition that they should enjoy a specially lenient regime because they claim that their crimes - murder, attempted murder, bombing, arson, wounding - were politically motivated. To concede this claim would be an implicit legitimisation of terrorism which no responsible government could contemplate (and no government in the western world has pressed such a course on us).

Furthermore, the campaign in the prisons is simply an extension of the Provisional IRA's campaign in the Province at large to make Northern Ireland ungovernable, force the British to quit, and leave the inhabitants at the mercy of a paramilitary force which would then seek to overthrow the Dublin Government and set up an all-Ireland military dictatorship. Against this background we are bound to resist the moral blackmail of the hunger strike - although we have continuously made it clear that we remain ready, once that blackmail is removed, to improve the general prison regime for all prisoners. I issued a full and carefully considered statement on this subject only a few days ago, and I enclose a copy for your information.

If there are any points on which you, or President Reagan, would like more explanation or information please do not hesitate to let me know.

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