

Mr Carmichael str CM/8/8
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PRISONS: DOCUMENTARY ON MAZE: NOTE FOR RECORD OF MEETING WITH
PETER TAYLOR AND STEVE HEWLETT ON 3 AUGUST 1990

Attendance

Mr Taylor
Mr Hewlett

Mr Steele
Mr McMullan
Governor, Maze
Mr S McNeill

Hewlett's Impressions

2. He was very appreciative of the free hand he had been given to conduct his research. His immediate reaction was of a much more relaxed environment that he had expected. He felt that prisoners generally were interested in making life as comfortable as possible for themselves rather than getting hung up on principles. They would find it difficult to raise a campaign on conditions in the light of the liberal provisions we have made and there was only likely to be a reaction if the Governor attempted to regain control on his terms.

3. While Republican prisoners showed no inclination to renounce the armed struggle there was a feeling that the initial simplistic "Brits Out" philosophy had to develop into more political areas and at least one high ranking Republican was strongly outspoken about "military" mistakes.

4. Many Loyalist prisoners seemed repentant about their crimes although it was clear to Hewlett that they lacked the common purpose and cohesion of Republicans and therefore were in a sense more attractive to him, ie they tended to speak more as individuals.

5. The overall impression given was that prisoners like Maze and are not prepared to loose the benefits there to go to Maghaberry for what they see as an inadequate return, eg a year or two off a life sentence.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

2

6. Prisoners generally felt that families were suffering more than they were and it was obvious that the various Home Leave Schemes have brought this home to them.

7. On the question of staff Hewlett chose his words very carefully. While accepting that some staff were very professional and had accepted the realities of Maze and were content to justify themselves on the basis of high security, no escapes, but a humane liberal regime, other staff were described less favourably and had shown themselves to be bigoted. Hewlett felt morale was generally low with staff believing they were under more pressure from Headquarters than from prisoners because of changes of policy. One example quoted was instructions to remove water containers and broom handles being used as unofficial weight training equipment and then shortly afterwards prisoners having access to what staff considered to be more dangerous multi gyms.

Format of Programme

8. Taylor pushed for an extension beyond one programme. He explained that they had unearthed a surprising amount of what he described as enlightening material dealing with the roots of the conflict and the way forward which could merit at least two if not three programmes. I reminded him however that the Secretary of State had agreed on the basis of one only and Taylor appeared to accept this.

Programme Content

9. This broke broadly into two headings - sequences illustrative of prison routines and interviews with individuals, prisoners and staff.

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3

Republican Fun Run - Sports Activities

10. On 11 August the Republicans will be doing their traditional charity run in the exercise yard. I raised no objection.

Loyalist Band

11. Loyalist prisoners had shown him with considerable pride band uniforms which they had made and an Orange Order type arch specially made for the tricentenary celebrations. While I expressed considerable reservations on this score, pointing out that it did not represent the normal routine at Maze and could have repercussions in the wider community I was satisfied that Taylor will not seek to exploit it but rather to show how some prisoners employ their time.

Search Team

12. I agreed to the filming of a search as part of the day to day routine of Maze while reserving the right to seek deletions if pieces of sensitive equipment were shown.

Immediate Reaction Force Training

13. The IRF members had no objection to being filmed provided their faces were obscured as they would be when wearing their riot helmets. They were particularly anxious that prisoners should not be aware that they also acted as the Prison Search Team when, of course, they are easily identifiable. I agreed to this as it will portray that, in addition to providing a liberal regime, we also have in reserve the power to control should this be necessary.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

C O N F I D E N T I A L

4

Play By Martin Meehan

14. The decision on whether the play will be permitted is with Headquarters. If, on further investigation, we allow Meehan to present the play then I said we would not object to a shot of the production. The play concentrates more on past history rather than the recent round of troubles.

Church Services

15. The Chaplains had kept Taylor at arms length. I reserved my position on this item pending Taylor's promised discussions with the Chaplains. I would be concerned that the Republican prisoners, quite out of character, would all attend the Church Service on the day in question and all appear to their more conservative supporters as "good" Roman Catholics.

Contact with Families

16. This would be covered in two ways. First, visits with a designated family leaving home for Maze and a prisoner getting ready for his visitor. In addition a prisoner would be "followed" going on Home Leave. They have singled out one particular prisoner, Eamonn McDermott, whose father is a Doctor, for this particular sequence. This is intended to portray the major changes which have taken place since the prisoner's committal with the prison in a sense being frozen in time. I said we would have no objections to this.

Top Risk Prisoners

17. I agreed to the filming of the movement of a Top Risk prisoner which is part of the normal prison routine.

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5

Staff Social Club

18. This sequence, involving a Country and Western night, would not contain any interviews but would rather portray officers relaxing. I was assured there would be no pejorative overtones and on that basis agreed to it.

Arts Centre

19. I had no objections to the portrayal of prisoners at work in this facility.

The Transfer of a Prisoner from Belfast to Maze

20. Again I had no objection to this but pointed out that filming of such a sequence would obviously depend on a willing prisoner sentenced at the beginning of the next court session in early September and having progressed through the 2 week allocation process in Belfast.

Governors Requests

21. The Governor would not be identified and this is acceptable again as part of the daily routine of the prison.

Visits by VIP or Board of Visitors

22. The Chairman of the Board of Visitors was content with this suggestion. I pointed out that no VIP visits were scheduled in the immediate future. Taylor explained that such a visit would be a useful vehicle for us to show a visitor's first impression of Maze.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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Education Service

23. I raised no objection to this. It will show the benefits of education for prisoners. Prisoners had explained to Taylor that, but for imprisonment, they would not have attained the academic standards they have.

Football

24. Taylor proposes to "follow" a wing going to and playing football.

Threats to Staff

25. I was pleased that Taylor wanted to portray the dangers faced by prison staff. I agreed to his filming the hands of prisoners checking their weapons into the armoury but did not agree to a sequence showing officers on the firing range.

Army Watchtower and Aerial shot

26. Taylor will raise this with HQNI.

Personal Interviews

27. The following is a list of prisoners whom Taylor feels he would like to interview and would probably be happy to be interviewed:

Loyalists

Whyte - Special Category Prisoner convicted of the murder of Senator Paddy Wilson.

Giles, who is one of the "Repenters".

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7

Gregg - convicted of the attempted murder of Gerry Adams and whose only regret seems to be that he did not succeed.

Large and Dillon - another two "Repenters".

Republicans

McCartney - now seen as the ostensible Republican O/C.

McCormac - this is one of the two prisoners who has got a Judicial Review on the cultural identity question.

Boyle - this lifer, who has been "knocked back" has obviously made a considerable impression on Taylor and Hewlett. I attempted to paint a more realistic portrait of this difficult prisoner.

MacDermott - this is the prisoner whom they would wish to follow up on a Home Leave visit to Londonderry.

Campbell - this prisoner, an engineering graduate, worked for British Steel and came back to the Province and made a conscious decision to get involved in terrorism after the Hunger Strikes. They are seeking to contrast his position with that of many of the prisoners who began their "careers" by throwing stones or petrol bombs and who moved on to high explosives and bullets.

Holland - a SOSP.

Green - formerly the nominal Republican O/C.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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8

Hardy - SOSP who has already been on Home Leave and who has sought judicial review on the lifer process.

O'Hagan.

28. In addition to these prisoners Taylor would be keen to interview, on camera, two staff. Principal Officer McLean, who runs the kitchen, made an extremely good impression on them. He has done extremely good work at Maze in resolving some of the earlier problems in relation to food, which the prisoners were exploiting. He has "negotiated" with them on the question of artificially manufactured shortages. The Republicans have agreed to play ball and he has said that with the extra materials at his disposal he can give them a more varied diet. Apparently there also have been intense negotiations on the question of Corn Flakes or Weetabix. The other member of staff is Principal Officer Erskine, a block PO who struck them as being very professional.

29. I expressed very serious concerns to Taylor about staff appearing on camera even if they volunteered to do so. Two members of staff have been murdered within days of their television appearance and even though the Republican prisoners may look kindly on PO McLean some of their colleagues on the outside may not. Taylor was content to leave the final decision on this to me.

Identification of Offences

30. Taylor said that it was important for the viewing public to understand the crimes for which these prisoners had been convicted. He wanted therefore to make some reference to their offences. I explained that as a Prison Service, apart from the lifer where the crime is considered as part of the reviewing process, we are not

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

9

concerned with the offence. It would prove difficult therefore if too much was made of this. I said that if the topic was handled very sensitively and if the nature of the offence came up in the interview with prisoners then we would not object.

Timing

31. Taylor is keen to start filming on 11 August. (The Meehan play will not be presented on 9 August. The Governor would not allow this on the anniversary of Internment in case other passions were aroused.) I pointed out the difficulties I was in with the absence of Gwyn Treharne. Taylor pointed out that Gwyn had made it clear that he would not accompany the film crew down the wings in any event. In discussion we reached a compromise. Filming in the week commencing 11 August will consist of a Republican Sports Day, the Loyalist band and interviews with prisoners, particularly, but not exclusively, with those going on Home Leave. Sequence shots of prison routine and staff interviews will await Mr Treharne's return from leave on 20 August.

Logistics

32. There will be a crew of three and the Governor, Maze, will supply a driver for any vehicle used.

Summary

33. Taylor emphasised that his proposals were a shopping list. He would not necessarily cover all the areas he had discussed with me and it might be that during filming other ideas would emerge. I am content that all or a combination of those sequences will give a fair reflection of Maze. Staff identities will be protected but I

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10

will certainly need some convincing before I agree to staff speaking on camera. The programme will be broadcast after the watershed probably at 9.30 pm. This would suit particularly well as I would be concerned at prisoners in other establishments hearing prisoners eulogising the lifestyle at Maze.

J M STEELE

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