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Title: Letter from John Peck, British Ambassador to Ireland, to the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, passing a message from the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, concerning Northern Ireland, particularly internment, the operation of Parliament and the electoral system, the security situation, the passage of men, arms and explosives across the border.

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BRITISH EMBASSY,
DUBLIN.

8 October 1971

By Des Taoiseach.

I have been instructed to pass the following message to you from the Prime Minister.

" I have today had talks with Brian Faulkner, in which we have gone over together a number of points which we discussed jointly at Chequers last week. I asked him about the progress being made by the Advisory Committee, which is considering the case of the internees, and he told me that it was already actively at work and had considered the first batch, including not only those who had appealed but also others about whom representations had been made. Their recommendations are expected early next week, and they expect, we understand, to press on fast with considering all cases, whether there are appeals or not.

The camp where the bulk of the internees are kept has been visited by an all-Party group of MPs from Westminster and representatives of the

An Taoiseach, Mr Jack Lynch, TD
DUBLIN

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International Red Cross who have been invited to inspect the camp are already in Northern Ireland.

We also talked over the details of the changes which the Northern Ireland Government might put forward in relation to the operation of Parliament, the electoral system and so on, in the consultations which the Home Secretary is seeking to undertake. We agreed that the sooner these consultations could get under way the better. We shall keep up the momentum of these as fast as the other parties allow us to do, and we hope that the members of SDLP representation in Stormont will be ready to join in these as they have been invited to do.

We also reviewed the security situation, in the light of the continuing activities of the terrorists. Ambushes and explosions, many of them entirely indiscriminate, continue and are bringing about a steady worsening of the economic and social situation. We shall have to take further security measures within Northern Ireland, but my discussions with Mr Faulkner confirmed me in the view that more drastic measures must be taken to make more difficult the passage of men, arms and explosives across the Border. I wished to let you know about this decision before any action was taken on it or information came out. Our intention is, as a first step, to block 84 (eighty-four) of the so-called quote unapproved unquote crossings. This will in

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most cases be achieved by cratering the roads, but care will be taken wherever possible to avoid unreasonable inconvenience, for example to farmers whose land lies on or athwart the Border. The second stage will be to "hump" the quote approved unquote crossing places, so as to slow traffic down and facilitate stopping and searching. Exactly how many of these approved crossing places there will be must to some extent depend on the manpower available to watch them. It is possible that manpower shortage may oblige us to keep open fewer crossing places than we should like.

I much regret the necessity for these measures which I recognise will cause much inconvenience to those who live on both sides of the Border, but the campaign of terrorism and the continuance of incidents in Border areas have left us with no alternative to them. You will understand that an improvement in the security situation is a necessary accompaniment to the progress we hope to make in developing political life in Northern Ireland, in which as you know it is our aim to provide for an active, permanent and guaranteed part to be played by the minority."

*Yours very sincerely,
John Peck*

John Peck

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