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JOINT STUDIES

1. During a discussion today with the British Ambassador about the London meeting on 29th July, and other matters, the following points emerged -

- (1) There is considerable friction between the N.I.O. and the F.C.O. The recent letter from the Prime Minister to American Political leaders had, in fact, been drafted and submitted by the N.I.O. without, apparently, any F.C.O. participation. Certainly the Ambassador had not seen the draft or known of the proposal to send the letter. If he had he would immediately have seen the dangers of picking on the reference in the press, to the inaccuracy of which his attention had already been drawn here;
- (2) He was curious as to the background to the visit to the Maze Prison yesterday by Mr. Adams. I said that our information appeared to point in the direction of the visits having been the result of pressure from the clergy, relatives and others. We were not sure yet as to what precisely its outcome would be - though things were not looking too bright;
- (3) The Ambassador had not been told of last Monday's meeting with the British Cabinet Secretary. He had heard of the British view that the meeting had gone well. We agreed that whatever about the immediate prospects, the hunger strikes must end at some time; and that when they did there should be something other than dissension etc. on which the two Prime Ministers could build. The basic problems in Northern Ireland required a great deal of attention to things other than the hunger strikes - important as these might be in the immediate future. I said that while no arrangements had been made, as yet, for the meeting between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister - and no arrangements could be made while the strikes continued - certain dates had been mentioned. The Ambassador said he was aware of these. He had the impression that, whatever the immediate difficulties, everybody in the Cabinet and Foreign Office - as well as the N.I.O. - was most anxious for a way out of the present impasse. We discussed the proposed Advisory Council in Northern Ireland, briefly, in this context.

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30th July, 1981.

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Copies to Mr. O'Rourke, D/F. Affairs and Msrs. Kirwan & Lillis.