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cc: PS/SOS (L & B) M
PS/Mr Alison (L & B) M
PS/PUS (L & B) M
PS/Mr Bell
Mr Marshall M
Mr Blelloch
Mr Wyatt
Mr Moriarty M
Mr Doyne-Ditmas
Mr Palmer (OR)
Mr Gilliland
Mr Jackson
Mr Harrington M

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① Mr Bell
② POL

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

In a conversation with Mr Wyatt yesterday afternoon John Hume expressed considerable anxiety about recent developments in Northern Ireland, and particularly about the mood of the Roman Catholic community, and asked if it were possible for him to meet the Secretary of State. Such a meeting was not possible, but the Secretary of State telephoned Mr Hume in Londonderry shortly before leaving for London.

Mr Hume spoke of increasing tension within the Catholic community and described the present situation as "pretty desperate". He and his party were under pressure if not to state publicly their support for the hunger strikers then at least to be seen to be pressuring the Government to talk to the hunger strikers.

Mr Hume was anxious for an official to go into the prison and talk to the hunger strikers on the basis of their 4 July statement which he suggested was not dissimilar to what he had said to the Prime Minister at their recent meeting.

The Secretary of State pointed out that since 4 July the prisoners had issued a further statement which repeated their more familiar hardline and clearly implied that they, rather than the prison authorities, should be in control of the prison. The Secretary of State nevertheless felt that, whilst this latest statement was disappointing, there was still hope for a resolution of the problem.

Mr Hume re-emphasised his concern and said that the strength of feeling, particularly in the Republic (he had been in Co Donegal the previous evening), aroused by the hunger strike was greater than

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ever. Action was required with the utmost urgency.

The Secretary of State undertook to report to the Prime Minister what Mr Hume had told him, and said that he would be in touch with Mr Hume again at the end of the week.

Mr Hume, whilst anxious throughout the conversation, was neither aggressive nor belligerent and appeared grateful for having had the opportunity to speak to the Secretary of State.

NOEL CORNICK
Private Secretary

14 July 1981

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