

E.R.

CC PS/SOS (B&L) - M  
 PS/Mr Scott (B&L) - M  
 PS/PUS (B&L) - M  
 PS/Sir Ewart Bell  
 Mr Bourn  
 Mr Brennan - M  
 Mr Buxton  
 Mr Merifield  
 Mr Doyne-Ditmas  
 Mr Palmer  
 Mr Gilliland  
 Mr Angel - M  
~~Mr Jackson~~  
 Mr Boys Smith - M

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

ESCAPE FROM HM PRISON, MAZE, 25 SEPTEMBER 1983

The Secretary of State met Mr Bourn, Mr Palmer and Mr Gilliland on Sunday evening, 25 September at Hillsborough Castle to discuss the first steps to be taken following the escape of 38 prisoners from H Block 7 at HM Prison, Maze, earlier in the day. I was also present.

Mr Palmer recounted the events surrounding the escape, noting that 15 of the prisoners had been recaptured, but that one Prison Officer had been killed and another very seriously injured. The block from which the prisoners had escaped had been entered by prison officers and was being searched. A massive Police and Army follow-up operation was in progress.

It was agreed that a statement should be issued forthwith saying:

- (i) The Secretary of State was in Northern Ireland and closely in touch with developments.
- (ii) No effort would be spared to recapture the fugitives. The RUC and the Army had called upon all the men they required for the operation and the Secretary of State was satisfied that they had all the resources they needed.
- (iii) The Secretary of State had called for an immediate full, rigorous and searching inquiry at the highest possible level into the escape, the introduction of weapons into the prison, etc.

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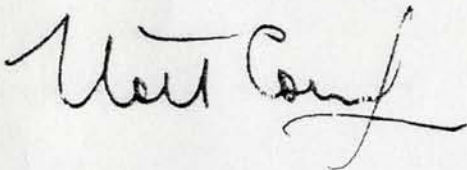
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- (iv) The Secretary of State extended his sympathy to the widow of the dead Prison Officer and to the families of those who had been injured.

The statement was issued to the media at approximately 2215 hours.

It was agreed that the Secretary of State would ask the Home Secretary to make available the services of the Chief Inspector of Prisons to carry out the inquiry. By coincidence, the Chief Inspector was to visit Northern Ireland the following day to carry out a routine inspection of HM Prison, Magilligan. Details of how the inquiry would be launched and announced would be decided the following morning, and the Press informed.

The Secretary of State agreed to have a further meeting with Mr Scott and officials at 10.00 am on Monday, 26 September, followed at 11.00 am by a Press Conference in Stormont Castle.



NOEL CORNICK  
Private Secretary

September 1983

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