

TRANSCRIPT OF LETTER FOUND IN H16 WING DINING HALL ON 19/6/86

The refusal of the NIO to permit a DUP fact finding visit to Magilligan on the 23rd May was the concept in pushing Loyalist prisoners into a hunger strike. We don't deny that the DUP visit was very important to us as prisoners for we wanted a recognised Political Party to see Magilligan for what it is. Magilligan is completely retrospective in its attitude towards conditions and tension has been explosive for a considerable period.

We the loyalist prisoners have tried all channels eg. Governor, Board of Visitors and petitions to the NIO in a genuine attempt to try and avoid confrontations only to have each effort slapped back into our face and now we will pursue the final course to highlight the vicious conditions inflicted on prisoners in Magilligan. We list the following points of conditions and ask any reasonable person if they could see any justification for such a harsh regime to prevail in Magilligan. But firstly, we challenge the NIO to give the DUP the necessary approval for an immediate fact finding visit to Magilligan, even take it a step further. We challenge the NIO to permit all political parties in Northern Ireland to have a fact finding visit to Magilligan, this would include, Off Unionists, SDLP, Alliance and even church men.

The reason the NIO refused the DUP visit was fear of the truth exposing the pettiness, brutality, and wrongs we as prisoners face daily. If the NIO have nothing to hide - - - then prove it!

1. The political parties must be permitted access to see the facts for themselves.
2. Conditions, the NIO have constantly boasted that Magilligan is a low security, fully conforming, full working prison. Then why do they have what is called, "Control Movement", which has been in operation since the segregation issue of 1984. Neither Loyalist or Republicans are seeking segregation. Yet the control movement is enforced rigidly and paradoxically selectively! for example, daily we get opened at 8.15am each day on working days Monday to Friday each prisoner has until 9.00am to get breakfast, wash, clean cells and prepare for work, the prison staff only permit 4 prisoners at any time on the landings, so it means that if a prisoner doesn't 'guzzle down his breakfast, wash and clean his cell within that period of time he will be put on a charge, the hypocrisy of control movement is that there are on average of 23 - 25 prisoners in each wing with four prison officers to man the wing, yet in contrast there could be in excess of 35 prisoners in a prison workshop with £500,000 or more in industrial machinery and only 3 prison officers as "watchers". We believe control movement is just an excuse to keep the prisoners behind doors, if the NIO despite this then why is controlled movement in existence? especially when the NIO boast that Magilligan is a fully conforming, fully working prison.

3. Association - Association as published by the NIO through the media during the IRA hunger strike of 1980 'the first hunger strike' stated that night association commences at 5.30 and continues until 8.30. In Magilligan the prison staff usually come into the wings around 5.45 and in some cases later, to open prisoners for association, lock up is called at 8.15 and all prisoners are literally rushed into their cells. In exercise, a half hour is stolen from us, this issue has been continually brought up to the Governor with no satisfaction. Again as published by the NIO, weekend association for Sat and Sunday afternoon is supposed to commence at 2.00pm until 4.30pm. The prison staff return from dinner between 2.15 and 2.30 then release men for association, and have introduced a new petty rule of lock up after one hour approx, so now we are only setting one hours association on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, this new practice was introduced on 19 April. On Wednesday 16 April Mr [REDACTED] was informed that the use of yards as part of night-time association was being withheld in Magilligan and also that video machines had been supplied to each block, yet never used for the prisoners during association. [REDACTED] spoke out on Friday 18th saying that "Magilligan is not running the same as all other prisons, Maze - Belfast. We state without fear of contradiction that night-time use of yards did not start until Friday 9th May, the videos have never at anytime been shown to any prisoner in Magilligan - ever! in fact the videos have since been removed, we ask the question why? was it to punish us for complaining to [REDACTED]? The Association for prisoners is suppose to consist of watching TV, cards, darts, record player, and in the clear nights, the use of the yards is added from 6pm to 8pm, at least, thats how it works in the Maze and Belfast Prisons. In Magilligan when the prison staff open prisoners for association at 5.45, the prisoners have to go to the yard or stay locked up. This is tctally wrong for in the Maze and Belfast prison, prisoners are given a choice of yards or canteen, when going to the yards in Magilligan, prisoners are prohibited from bringing anything to the yards, no tea, radios, playing cards, games, in short, nothing. During Association prisoners are only allowed to show or bath between 6pm and 7pm, and if all prisoners aren't washed showered before 7pm, then those who haven't had the chance loose out, again with control movement, how could it be possible to wash and shower 25 men in one hour, if only 4 prisoners at a time are allowed on the landing.

4. Exercise as a right as opposed to a privilage a prisoner is entitled to one hours exercise daily as all prisoners work from Monday to Friday exercise is given between 1pm and 2pm again the full hour is never achieved for we go to the yards at 1pm and are locked up at 1.45pm on any day. ~~Its raining-even in a rain-spittle~~ the exercise is cancelled. In Ulsters other Prisons the prisoners are permitted to go to the canteen in the event of inclement weather the at 2pm no matter how wet/snowy or cold it is prisoners are required to walk through rain or snow to work.

-3-

5. Laundry and Personal Laundry In all prisons throughout N Ireland each inmate gets a weekly change of laundry 2 sheets, 1 pillow case and 1 towel in Magilligan we get 1 sheet, 1 pillow case and 1 towel. It is very unhygienic to ask a man to sleep on the same sheet for two weeks again the authorities have been asked to let us have both sheets changed at the same time they refused, personal laundry each prisoner can have 3 sets of clothing. We aren't allowed to wash our cloths in the wing except for underwear and socks. The clothing allowance is 3 pullovers, 3 shorts, 2 pair of shoes, one dress and one sports, 3 pair of jeans 3 teeshirts, 2 coats. Now if we send clothing to the P/Laundry as required it takes approx two weeks for them to return to the inmate. Lets assume I sent a set of clothing to the laundry on the 1st May it will be the 14 before I receive them back. If I have a set of clothes for a visits then it means I have to wear my final pair for 14 days both to work and in the wing. We feel there is no justification for such a long period of 14 days especially when Magilligan has a laundry in the jail.

6. Visits in April 1986 from Tuesday 1st to Monday the Republican and Ordinary RC prisoners refused visits as a protest against the Authorities not permitting any prisoner sitting beside his wife or girlfriend. Not long after this protest one of the two visiting areas (not in use) was stripped of its cubicle type boxes and turned into an open visit room. It is now just a big open room with tables and chairs. Recently an official from the NIO was told that the visits had been changed to the open type visits which were to have been brought into operation in July. The NIO were furious at Gov Semple for taking a personal decision to change the visits and not consulting the NIO. Again we stress that Magilligan is a medium to low security prison. The NIO have accused contraband of being smuggled to prisoners through visits. In the wake of the mass escape at the Maze in 1983 the NIO accused prisoners relatives and even legal visitors of smuggling firearms to the escapees, yet on his own admission in March this year 1986 a Prison Officer at the Maze a [REDACTED] admitted he smuggled (through the front gates) a number of guns including an Uzi sub-machine gun, on going to visits each inmate is given a thorough body search. 1 in every 3 inmates is stripped going to and from visits. We feel that the visits issue is a very serious and emotional issue and demand the right to sit beside our wife or girlfriend.

7. Prison Shop - Since last summer there has been quite a cut back in the amount of items stocked by the shop. For no reason at all the following items were withdrawn from the shop by Gov Semple. Roll on deodrants, talcum powder, food stuffs like butter, pot noodles, sardines, paste and meat spreads. When the various Blocks Goves were asked why these items were stopped and asked to restore them. We were told the prison food was sufficient. The present stock on offer to prisoners consists of biscuits, chocolate, crisps, tobacco, cordials, and lemonade,

19/06/86

05047 65931

13:49

HMP MAGILLIGAN

NO. 008

004/004

-4-

and cheese spread. And the most inmates earn an average of £2.75 for there weeks work. On top of that we can add £2.50 of our own money. If a inmate is unfortunate enough not to any any money in his personel account provided by his family he has to survive on his wages of £2.75 a week. Again until last year on the event of a birthday, wedding anniversary or at Christmas time we were permitted to buy greeting cards or boxes of chocolates from our personel accounts. Now on Gov Semples instructions any Birthday cards of boxes of chocolates as presents must be bought from prison wages. If around £2.75 and if the items cost over £2.75 then to bad. When one considers that 1oz of tabacco cosots £2.10 in the prison shop just how is a prisoner supposed to cope.

8. Since 1984 the amount of disciplinary charges against prisoners has reached phenomenal stage even to the point of prisoners being malicously set up and framed by certain prison officers. Some prisoners have even been charged and lost remission for soft porn magazines allegedly found in the inmates cell, (where did such magazines come from in the first place in a parcel? smuggled through visits) or the favourite set up is planting a razor blade in a cell during a cell search. The inmate is not permitted to be present. The word of the prison officer is always taken. Any prisoner appearing in front of Gov Semple knows he will lose remission and go to solitary confinement for at least 3 days. If it is possible to ask parlimentary questions on the amount of Magilligan charged convicted and sentences awarded by the Governor. The answer would have to be stated.

cc



MR GILMORE (P.I.U.)

FILE

15