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P.A.

*Mr. Murray in
The
20/4*

S20574.

Misc.
F. 2.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

*Secretary
to the
Government
To see Mr.
Murray*

30.4.81

To: Mr. W. Kirwan, Assistant Secretary

From: F. Murray.

As arranged I received the attached message from Mr. David Tatham, Counsellor at the British Embassy yesterday evening at about 6.15 p.m. Mr. Tatham stressed the confidentiality of the message stating that its contents would not be released by the British authorities. It was their understanding that Fr. MacGee would not be making any statement in the matter either. They recognised that Sands' proposition as outlined in paragraph 3 would probably become public knowledge at some stage. In their view either Sands himself or his supporters would disclose the "offer" at whatever time they considered appropriate.

*This may
depend on
what access
the Provisionals
outside had
to Sands at
the relevant
time - given
his own
weakening
state of
health*

30.4.81

With regard to paragraph 3 I asked Mr. Tatham what precisely was meant by the sentence "Mr. Sands had not responded". I was told that Mr. Sands had in fact said no to Fr. MacGee's request on behalf of the Pope. The phrase "not responded" in the message meant that Mr. Sands had not responded favourably to the Pope's appeal.

As regards the Sands' proposition Mr. Tatham made it clear that this was not on. The British Government were not prepared to consider such a request.

In relation to Mr. Sands' general condition Mr. Tatham said that, on the basis of the information he had received, there had been no worsening in his position as compared with the previous day. I enquired as to whether there was any assessment of how long Mr. Sands might last at this stage. Mr. Tatham said he did not have that information. He did confirm however that Mr. Hughes condition had deteriorated significantly over the past few days and that if the hunger strike continued Mr. Hughes death could come fairly soon after that of Mr. Sands.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

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I told Mr. Tatham of our anxiety to be kept appraised of all developments in relation to the condition of the hunger strikers. I said that we would greatly appreciate being kept informed of developments at all times.

Mr. Tatham asked what our impression was of reaction to the hunger strike. In response I said I could only offer a personal opinion as we had no survey or anything of that sort to go on. At present it would appear that public support for the hunger strikers was not significant. I instanced the small size of the public marches /demonstrations and some comments heard on an R.T.E. radio interview. However, it was likely that public reaction would be different following a death. Mr. Tatham agreed with this view. In addition I referred to the widespread coverage of the hunger strike in the media both here and abroad particularly in the U.S. and in Eurpoe. I also referred to reports received from Australia. Mr. Tatham agreed that the Provisional Movement had had considerable propaganda successes abroad.

Mr. Tatham in the course of four brief meeting mentioned that the Northern Ireland Secretary of State was very impressed with Fr. MacGee. He had not put this in the written message in case it might appear to be condescending. I thanked Mr. Tatham for his call and message and said that I would pass it on to my authorities immediately.

J. Hurley
30th April, 1981.

*Copies to W. Posh Annrach air
W. D. heligan A/GA+M.*

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MOST IMMEDIATE
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30/4/1981
TO LONDON FROM HQ
FOR AMBASSADOR FROM ASST. SEC. NELIGAN

MMMLKJJH

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF NOTE HANDED IN BY BRITISH EMBASSY HERE AT 6.00 P.M. YESTERDAY. IT IS PART OF AN INTERNAL EMBASSY MINUTE AND "US" IN PARAGRAPH 1 ACCORDINGLY MEANS "BRITISH EMBASSY":-

1. MR. WYATT RANG AT 5PM TO BRING US UP-TO-DATE ON FATHER MACGEE'S MISSION.
2. FATHER MACGEE HAD SEEN MR. SANDS LAST NIGHT FOR 75 MINUTES. HE HAS SAID PUBLICLY THAT HIS MISSION WAS A SPIRITUAL ONE, NOT POLITICAL, AND HIS SOLE PURPOSE WAS TO ASK MR. SANDS TO GIVE UP HIS STRIKE.
3. FATHER MACGEE SAW MR. ATKINS THIS MORNING TO TELL HIM THAT HE HAD URGED MR. SANDS TO GIVE UP HIS STRIKE AND TO DELIVER A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE POPE TELLING MR. SANDS THAT IT WAS HIS DUTY TO STOP. MR. SANDS HAD NOT RESPONDED. HOWEVER, HE HAD ASKED FATHER MACGEE TO TELL MR. ATKINS THAT HE WOULD SUSPEND HIS STRIKE FOR FIVE DAYS ON CONDITION THAT A NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE OFFICIAL SHOULD GO TO THE MAZE AND NEGOTIATE THE PRISONERS' FIVE DEMANDS IN THE PRESENCE OF "GUARANTORS".
4. MR. ATKINS HAD SEEN FATHER MACGEE AS A COURTESY TO THE POPE'S REPRESENTATIVE AND NOT TO NEGOTIATE. THE NIO WERE NOT PREPARED TO DISCUSS MR. SANDS' REQUEST. THEY RECOGNISED THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE SOONER OR LATER BUT DID NOT SEE ANY ADVANTAGE IN THE NEWS BEING RELEASED NOW.
5. FATHER MACGEE WAS NOT CERTAIN WHEN HE WOULD BE LEAVING NORTHERN IRELAND: HE WISHES TO SEE THE OTHER HUNGER STRIKERS AND HAS SPOKEN OF SEEING THE RELATIVES OF VICTIMS OF IRA VIOLENCE - NO NAMES WERE MENTIONED. THE NIO HAVE TOLD HIM THEY ARE HAPPY FOR HIM TO RETURN TO THE MAZE AND TO CONFIRM HMG'S POSITION. THEY WOULD NOT WISH TO SEE HIM AGAIN AFTERWARDS AS THIS WOULD GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE HAD BECOME AN INTERMEDIARY IN A NEGOTIATION. FATHER MACGEE UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED THIS SITUATION.

TAOISEACH IS MOST ANXIOUS TO BE KEPT INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS AND WHILE WE HOPE THAT THE NIO - BRITISH EMBASSY CHANNEL WILL CONTINUE TO BE USED WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD ALSO KEEP OPEN CONTACTS AT YOUR END AND ARRANGE TO HAVE NIO/FCO APPRISE YOU PROMPTLY OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS AND REACTIONS THERETO.

END

---1051 30/4/1981 ☒

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