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Mrs. Liddy (Legal Section) told me that the European Commission of Human Rights have informed the Parties of the results of their deliberations in the case brought by 4 Northern Ireland H Block prisoners. It had been revealed last October that the Commission had decided to communicate the complaints to the British Government. The results conveyed to the two parties have not been made public but it is understood that the Commission has effectively rejected the prisoners' claims of breaching Article 3 of the European Convention relating to disciplinary punishment and general prison conditions at Long Kesh, apparently on the grounds that the conditions are self inflicted. The prisoners' claims under this Article were the main element in their case to the Commission. Their other (related) complaints to the Commission are under Articles 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 18. It is understood that the Commission has not delivered an opinion on these other complaints but would be expected to do so by about the end of May if the parties do not in the meantime reach a 'friendly settlement' on the issue. The idea of conveying their opinion solely in relation to Article 3 at the moment and on a confidential basis is to allow the parties the opportunity of reaching a 'friendly settlement' whereupon the necessity for a full report by the Commission would be obviated (including their deliberations on Art 3). Obviously the Commission are aware of the possibility that the parties might leak the Commission's decision but apparently they feel that it may not be in either of the parties' interests to do so at the moment (indeed neither party has done so to date despite the fact that the Commission communicated with them last week).

Mrs. Liddy will keep us informed of any developments.

*[Handwritten signature]*

M. Collins  
28 March 1980

- c.c. Mr. Neligan
- Mr. O hUiginn
- Mr. Burke
- Mr. Murray
- Department of the Taoiseach

*[Handwritten notes]*  
 in the case  
 to see the ...  
 on 25/4.  
 — *[Handwritten signature]*  
 31.3.80