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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RT HON. DOUGLAS HURD, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR N. IRELAND 8/7/85

We wish to bring to your attention the grievances and aspirations of the Catholic people in N. Ireland, as we see it from our everyday experience. What we present might be called the "worm's eye view", the feelings and worries of ordinary folk and not so much the views of politicians. The memorandum is under four headings - 1. Law and Order, 2. Political, 3. Economic, 4. Cultural.

LAW AND ORDER

Catholics want basic justice and fair-play. This means Fair judges and fair legal procedures. The courts of law must be such as can be recognised by fair and impartial persons throughout the world. They must conform to international legal standards and charters of human rights.

N. Ireland has maintained emergency legislation since 1922 and permanently since 1934. At first it was the Northern Ireland (Special Powers) Act, 1922, a piece of draconian legislation which was the envy of the Minister for Justice in South Africa. Since 1973 we have the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act, and since 1975 the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Our fundamental thesis is

- (a) That denial of human rights and civil liberties, not terrorism and subversion, is the fundamental problem of N. Ireland
- (b) That emergency legislation which restricts human rights and civil liberties is not the way to tackle the problem
- (c) That human rights and civil liberties should be restored in full and protected in future by the safeguards of the ordinary criminal law.

Special powers acts, emergency legislation, have led to internment, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment in Holywood Palace barracks and Girdwood Barracks, sensory deprivation in Ballykelly Barracks, inhuman and degrading treatment in Castlereagh and Gough interrogation centres. Terror from governments, despite atrocities from terrorism, is not to be condoned.

More than a hundred innocent people have been murdered by the British Army/UDR/RUC. There is a Shoot to Kill policy on the part of these forces.

The Diplock Courts have been corrupted by the acceptance of confessions under torture and ill-treatment, blackmail, verbal statements and "supergrasses". The present scenario of the corruption of law in the courts of N. Ireland is the acceptance by the judges of the uncorroborated evidence of men of worthless character. The supergrass trials seem to hold in the case of "republicans" and fall down in the case of "loyalists".

Arming the Protestants. This is an old tradition dating back to partition and the B Specials. In N. Ireland the British Government has backed the "loyalist" side of the community as against the "nationalist" community. 20,000 Protestants have been

officially armed in the RUC, RUC Reserve, and the UDR. Furthermore huge numbers of Protestants have been granted gun licenses. There is a policy to deny Catholics gun licences - official complaints have been made by Catholics living in the Lough Shore area. The granting of gun licences is controlled by the RUC. Catholics can not join the "Security Forces" in the North of Ireland and be allowed full expression of their Irishness. They must set aside their Irishness as a prerequisite.

The sectarian UDR, guilty of murder, assaults, and continual harassment and hatred of Catholics, must be disbanded.

The RUC are guilty of serious abuses of law against persons arrested under Section 11 of the Emergency Provisions act and section 12 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, such^{as} assaults, blackmail, threats of multiple arrests and the practice of multiple arrests against Catholics. During the interrogation of Catholics, RUC men insult the Catholic religion, pope, priests, nuns, the Blessed Virgin, use filthy talk about wives, children girlfriends of the arrested, and curse those arrested.

RUC men search and humiliate young Catholic men on the public streets, empty their pockets, and recently in Armagh have made a young man take off his shoes on the street. They insult and bully families when they search homes.

There must be independent and impartial machinery for the investigation of complaints against the security forces. The main problem in processing complaints is the collection of evidence. That is difficult post factum unless there is specific medical evidence. All interviews under the PTA and EPA should be taped. There should be officials with power similar to the District Attorney in the USA who can walk into a police interview at any time, see the prisoners, inspect papers, and oversee interrogations from the point of view of human rights.

Orange, Black, and Apprentice Boys parades through Catholic districts and on the periphery of Catholic districts are coat-trailing exercises and will no longer be tolerated by Catholics. Catholics note that there is no hesitation in banning Catholic marches, even in their own districts.

Prisoners. The key to peace is the immediate release of prisoners who are being held hostage by the British Government. Many prisoners have served 8 - 12 years and could be released without the slightest risk to the community. It is time moves were made on lifers and longtermers, despite the political situation and the latest atrocities. Paramilitary groups need prisoners to feed on resentment and grievance. The good effect of releases on families would be immense. We are convinced that there is no better means of countering the deepfelt injustice in the Catholic community than the release of prisoners, speedily and systematically Those detained at the Secretary of State's pleasure, SOSPs, young people convicted for crimes when they were under 17 years of age and who are serving life sentences, should be given dates of release. Some of these have already been brought to your attention like Malachy Crilly and Paul Mc Manus of Armagh, Thomas Morgan, Jonesborough, Patrick Mc Kinney and Billy Gormd of Belfast (who are innocent). The Secretary of State should look at longtermers like John Mc Vetch, Lurgan (innocent and sick), Hugh Feeney, Belfast, Adrian Cassin, Armagh

Patrick Thompson, S. Armagh (innocent), Michael Holden, Junior May, Gerard Fearon, Jonesborough, Sean Doran , Mathew Cavanagh, Gary Smith, Oliver Corr, Gerard Mc Clelland Paul Toal.

The failure to restore remission lost in the "blanket" strike in Long Kesh and Armagh has been a great disappointment. It serves no purpose only to make people suffer and causes great resentment. Indeed if a simple thing like that can not be undertaken to benefit people like Jean Hamill, Anne Mc Erlean, Dolores O Neill in Armagh Prison, for example, then we realise there is no hope of anything being done to bring about peace. There are 40,000 jobs involved on security in N. Ireland . It is the biggest industry in the North. Does this dictate the policy of the Ministers? Catholics have the impression that many of the Unionist community, RUC, UDR and the prison service do not want a compassionate and tolerant policy that might put their jobs at risk.

The Stripping Naked of the Women in Armagh Prison is an abomination, it is cruel, inhuman , degrading, and shocking. Stop it.

We ask for a declaration of the innocent of Giuseppe Conlon, Annie Maguire and the rest who served long sentences and were innocent; the recent Channel 4 and RTE television programmes on them made a big impact on the public; everybody knows they were innocent. The Six men jailed for the Birmingham pub bombings are innocent. Gerard Conlon, Paul Hill, Patrick Armstrong, and Caroline Richardson are also innocent. All should be released.

POLITICAL

Recent surveys have estimated the Catholic population of N. Ireland as between 38% and 42%, with higher percentages in the younger strata. Catholics are by far the largest major church denomination in the North. It is political propaganda to dub them as the "Minority" ; this is done deliberately to give an impression that they do not deserve equal rights. Most Catholics are nationalists who aspire to a United Ireland and an ending to the imposed partition of their country. They are a substantial people who demand power in any political short-term or longterm solutions. They will not be a tie-on to the south, neither will they be the "Croppie Lie Down Minority" of the North. As guarantors of human rights we need the Dublin and London Parliaments and an established commission from the European Court of Human Rights.

ECONOMIC

The British Government is still backing the Unionist monopoly of jobs in the decision making ranks of the civil service. Catholics and nationalists have no voice there and it has been impossible for Ministry to get any idea of the thinking of the Catholic community. This is withheld from them. How can they possible deal with situations when this is so ? Unionist control the importation of goods and the wholesale industry . Harland and Wolfs, Sirocco, Mackeys Foundry, Short Brothers,

Gallaghers, Ulsterbus maintenance at Duncrue Street, Belfast, are names which are synonymous with blatant discrimination against Catholics. In recent times Shorts has become the symbol of injustice - it viciously discriminates against Catholics, yet it used chicanery to get the Irish Government to insure it prosperous orders and new lease of life in the USA, then failed to honour a ledge to open a subsidiary factory in old "De Lorean", mocked the applications of talented young Catholics, and scoffed at Catholics by festooning its works with Union Jacks, bunting and pictures of King Billy and marching an Orange band through the works!

Discrimination against Catholics can be divided into four categories :-

1. The public and private sector.
2. The geographical discrimination in siting of factories and government offices.
3. The new "security certificates" where discrimination can now be placed in the hands of the RUC.
4. Discrimination against ex-prisoners.

The FEA and other bodies who have made surveys re discrimination are to be commended. Discrimination against Catholics was always blatantly denied by the Stormont Government, understandably as they pursued it as policy. The Cameron Report was the first official admission. On this point direct rule is preferable to legislative assemblies - Unionists won't share power at local council level, and such assemblies would be similar. Progress has to go beyond surveys and official admission of discrimination. Catholics want to see quick and major results - festering sores like the professorship staffs of Queen's University and Shorts must be remedied at once to show symbolic sincerity on the part of government. Gestures could be made at once towards the Catholic canton West of the Bann - the creation of an enterprise zone there as in Belfast.

CULTURAL

Nationalists must be allowed to express their Irishness in full freedom. This includes the legal recognition of the Irish language. Irish nationalists have always felt deeply the intolerance shown to signs of Irishness - music, games, language. The grant to the Irish language primary school and the new Irish programme on the BBC is to be welcomed. There should not be offsets like the confiscation of Irish bibles in Long Kesh because prisoners had autographed them. One notes the great growth of historical societies and their formation into a nine county Ulster Federation for Local Studies. It is a sign that some people are meditating on their traditions, seeing that they are not necessarily opposed to one another and enriching themselves by this study of Irish history so long officially kept from Protestants in education curricula.

CONCLUSION

Is there anyone listening to the views of Catholics in the N. Ireland Office? Will anything be done on the points we have made? Pope John Paul II said at Drogheda that there was another way. But is there, if the view of a substantial people is not taken into consideration?