

GRS 620
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FM CANBERRA 020050Z SEP 81
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 374 OF 2 SEPTEMBER

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Australia
*If he persists with the hunger
strike he might well die during
CHG??*

YOUR TELEGRAM NO 314 : SYDNEY HUNGER STRIKER

Ph...

1. WHEN THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANBERRA CALLED ON ME ON 1 SEPTEMBER HE LEFT WITH ME, TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF CARDINAL FREEMAN'S NORTHERN IRELAND STATEMENT, A LETTER TO HIM FROM ARCHBISHOP CARROLL OF THE SYDNEY DIOCESE.

2. THIS READS AS FOLLOWS:

QUOTE

AS YOU ARE AWARE, CARDINAL FREEMAN AND HIS ASSISTANT BISHOPS HAVE FELT DEEP CONCERN IN REGARD TO THE YOUNG MAN WHO IS ON HUNGER STRIKE IN SYDNEY IN SYMPATHY WITH THE PRISONERS AT THE MAZE PRISON, LONG KESH, BELFAST, AND THAT THERE HAS BEEN DISCUSSION BETWEEN CARDINAL FREEMAN AND THE PRIME MINISTER.

WE HAVE CONSIDERED IT OPPORTUNE TO ISSUE THE ENCLOSED STATEMENT WHICH SHALL BE PUBLISHED VERBATIM IN THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY THIS WEEK AND WHICH WILL BE GIVEN TO THE DAILY PRESS AT SOME TIME ON TUESDAY (TOMORROW) 1ST SEPTEMBER, EXPECTING IT TO RECEIVE SOME PUBLICITY IN WEDNESDAY'S PRESS.

THE YOUNG MAN IN QUESTION HAS REMAINED UNMOVED BY ANY APPEALS DIRECTED TO HIM INSISTING THAT HE WILL CONTINUE TO REFUSE FOOD UNTIL THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT MAKES SOME PUBLIC APPEAL TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITAIN ON BEHALF OF THE PRISONERS AT LONG KESH, A REQUEST WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER CONSIDERS THAT HIS GOVERNMENT IS UNABLE TO MEET.

AS THE YOUNG MAN'S OBSTINANCY SHOWS NO SIGN OF ABATING AND AS WE FEAR WHAT CONSEQUENCES MAY BE RESULTANT UPON HIS DEATH SHOULD IT OCCUR, WE THE BISHOPS OF SYDNEY HAVE THOUGHT IT TO BE IN ORDER FOR US AS A GROUP OF REPRESENTATIVE CITIZENS OF AUSTRALIA TO MAKE A REQUEST TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF BRITAIN. THIS HAS NOT BEEN DONE WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF FEDERAL CABINET.

ACCORDINGLY, ON BEHALF OF CARDINAL FREEMAN AND THE BISHOPS, I HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO SEEK YOUR GOOD OFFICES TO BRING THE MATTER BEFORE THE HIGH COMMISSIONER AND IN TURN TO SEEK HIS ASSISTANCE IN BRINGING THE REQUEST OF THE BISHOPS TO THE NOTICE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.
UNQUOTE

3. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION, ARCHBISHOP CLANCY SAID THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE STATEMENT WAS TO PROVIDE AN EXCUSE FOR O'CONNOR TO ABANDON HIS HUNGER STRIKE. I WELCOMED THIS. I FURTHER TOLD THE ARCHBISHOP THAT CARDINAL FREEMAN MIGHT PUBLICLY SAY THAT I HAD BROUGHT HIS STATEMENT TO THE NOTICE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

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4. WE HAVE ASKED THE AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHAT IS BEHIND THE SENTENCE IN THE LETTER: QUOTE THIS HAS NOT BEEN DONE WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF FEDERAL CABINET UNQUOTE.

AT OFFICIAL LEVEL, THEY THINK THAT THIS MEANS NO MORE THAN THAT SENATOR CARRICK, THE NEW SOUTH WALES BASED LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE, ADVISED CARDINAL FREEMAN, UPON THE LATTER'S REQUEST, THAT HIS STATEMENT COULD BEST BE BROUGHT TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S ATTENTION THROUGH ME. THEY SAY THAT THERE HAVE BEEN INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN MINISTERS ABOUT THE HUNGER STRIKER, BUT NO FORMAL MEETING. THEY WILL LET US KNOW IF THEY LEARN ANYTHING MORE.

5. I SPOKE TO ARCHBISHOP CLANCY ON THE LINES OF THE FINAL PARAGRAPH OF YOUR TUR. I HANDED TO HIM, FOR TRANSMISSION TO CARDINAL FREEMAN, THE TEXT OF MR HUMPHREY ATKINS' SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 2 JULY, DRAWING HIS ATTENTION IN PARTICULAR TO PAGE 4 ET SEQ OF VERBATIM SERVICE 098/81, DESCRIBING THE EFFORTS WHICH ARE BEING MADE TO MAKE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. I ALSO GAVE HIM A COPY OF THE LETTER WHICH I HAVE WRITTEN TO THE OPPOSITION LEADERS WHO SIGNED THE PETITION IN FAVOUR THE DEMANDS OF THE HUNGER STRIKERS (MY TELNO 371): AND OUR LATEST MATERIAL ON HUNGER STRIKES (FCO PAPER OF AUGUST 1981 (REVISED)). COPIES OF CARDINAL FREEMAN'S STATEMENT, AND OF MY LETTER TO THE OPPOSITION LEADERS BY BAG.

6. THE ONLY (VERY BRIEF) PRESS REPORTS ON 2 SEPTEMBER OF THE CARDINAL'S STATEMENT WERE IN TWO SYDNEY NEWSPAPERS. THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD QUOTES THE APPEAL TO THE QUOTE YOUNG MAN IN OUR OWN MIDST..... TO CEASE HIS FAST IMMEDIATELY UNQUOTE: THE DAILY TELEGRAPH REPORTS THAT QUOTE O'CONNOR REJECTED YESTERDAY THE LATEST PLEA TO GIVE UP HIS FAST FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY UNQUOTE. O'CONNOR ENTERS TODAY THE 26TH DAY OF HIS FAST.

MASON

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