

## Reg. No.

**P!**

182/89

Papers from Year ..... 1989

**PRISONERS**

Secretary

Briefing... for... New Secretary... of State (1983)...

✓  
FIRST DAY BRIEFS ✓

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BRIEF: C.II

## MAIN HISTORICAL EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

### 1920

The Government of Ireland Act first produced the division of Ireland which continues today. Separate Parliaments for the North and South, with Irish representation at Westminster, and Westminster supremacy preserved. Matters of common concern within Ireland to be controlled by Council of Ireland (never met). Not regarded as final settlement; the unification of Ireland could come about if both Parliaments so desired. But Act not acceptable in the South.

### 1921

May First election to Northern Ireland Parliament (by proportional representation using the Single Transferable Vote system).

June King George V opened Parliament in Belfast. Appealed for peace and reconciliation in Ireland.

December Treaty signed in London setting up Irish Free State as self-governing dominion within the Empire. Oath of allegiance to Crown and common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain. The Irish Free State formally covered the whole of Ireland but Northern Ireland Parliament given right to exclude itself, retaining UK status as in Government of Ireland Act. In the latter event, a Boundary Commission with tripartite representation to determine the Border.

### 1922

January Britain formally handed power to provisional Irish Free State government led by Collins, Cosgrave and O'Higgins.

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June The Government pro-Treaty party won 58 seats in Dail election as opposed to 35 for De Valera's anti-Treaty party. Civil war between pro and anti-Treaty forces.

December The Constitution of the Irish Free State came into force; Northern Ireland petitioned the Crown to be excluded.

1923

May Ceasefire in civil war.

1924

Boundary Commission appointed. Leaked Report contained minimal changes.

1925

The three parties agreed not to publish the Boundary Commission Report but to affirm existing border. The Agreement also pledged the two Irish Governments to friendly and neighbourly relationships with regular cross-border meetings.

1929

Proportional representation discontinued as method of election to Northern Ireland House of Commons.

1931

Statute of Westminster confirmed position of Irish Free State as a Dominion, in parallel with Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland.

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1937

As part of policy of repudiating Treaty of 1921 and Agreement of 1925, de Valera's Free State Government put to referendum a new Constitution, Articles 2 and 3 of which proclaimed the national territory to be the whole island of Ireland. Ireland proclaimed a sovereign independent democratic state. According to the constitution the name of the state was 'Ireland' - 'Eire' in the Irish language. Thus in Britain the term 'Eire' was generally adopted.

1939-45

Eire neutral in Second World War

1948

Eire established the Republic of Ireland; last link with the Crown and Commonwealth severed.

1949

Westminster's Ireland Act affirmed that Northern Ireland is a part of the UK, and that no part of it should cease to be so without the consent of the Northern Ireland Parliament. The Act declared that notwithstanding that the Republic had ceased to be part of HM dominions, it was not a foreign country and its citizens were not foreigners (eg citizens could vote in UK Parliamentary elections if otherwise qualified).

1956-62

IRA Border campaign, with internment in North and South. Two Sinn Fein candidates elected in 1955 Westminster election but subsequently disqualified because at the time of the election they were convicted felons.

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1965

Meetings between Terence O'Neill and Sean Lemass led to closer co-operation on tourism and electricity.

December Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement.

1966

UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force), loyalist paramilitary organisation named after 1912 anti-Home Rule militia, proscribed after murders of Catholics in Malvern St.

1968

Emergence of Civil Rights Movement opposed to discrimination in local authority housing, employment and franchise. Demonstrations, counter-demonstrations and sectarian fighting.

November O'Neill's five-point reform programme conceded many of the Civil Rights Movement's demands.

1969

January Protestant extremists attacked a civil rights march at Burntollet, outside Londonderry.

June Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (NI) and Commissioner for Complaints (NI) established.

August Sectarian violence beyond capacity of RUC to control. Northern Ireland Government requested Army support.

Downing Street Declaration re-affirmed NI's status, emphasised that troops would be withdrawn when order restored, and pledged equality of treatment and freedom from discrimination.

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December Internal dissensions in the weakened IRA led Provisional (favouring militant struggle to achieve National aim) to split from Officials (favouring Marxist-type political action). Later, both wings embarked on campaign of violence exploiting presence of British Army in Catholic areas.

September Cameron Report on the disturbances found "a rising sense of continuing injustice and grievance" among some Northern Ireland Catholics over discrimination.

1970

Following the recommendations of the Hunt Committee, the Ulster Special Constabulary - the 'B' Specials - a focus of much Catholic resentment. disbanded.

1971

February Housing Executive Act (NI) passed centralising former housing functions of local authorities.

August Northern Ireland Government, after consultation with HMG at Westminster, introduced internment. SDLP withdrew from public bodies in protest.

1972

Violence intensified. Bloody Sunday. HMG decided to take full control of law and order, and NI Government resigned. Stormont prorogued, and direct rule from Westminster began on 30 March.

May Official IRA announced ceasefire, which has more or less held until present time.

June Provisionals announced ceasefire and later met Mr Whitelaw in London. Within two weeks PIRA engineered a confrontation with the Army and resumed their campaign.

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July Operation Motorman, 10 days after Bloody Friday, eliminated the "no-go" areas.

September HMG held a conference at Darlington to discuss the political future. SDLP and DUP refused to attend. A Green Paper was published in October.

1973

March Border Poll recorded clear majority of the electorate in favour of Union; large-scale Catholic abstention. White Paper proposed new legislative Assembly elected by PR and formation of government with widespread support throughout community.

June Elections to the Assembly using PR/STV.

November Following talks between the parties and HMG agreement was reached on the formation of an Executive headed by Brian Faulkner and comprising 6 Unionists, 4 SDLP and 1 Alliance.

November Local government reorganisation took place following PR/STV elections in May.

December The Executive-designate met representatives of HMG and the Republic of Ireland at Sunningdale to discuss a Council of Ireland, and outline agreement was reached.

1974

January Mr Faulkner lost the leadership of the UUP, and in the February General Election anti-Sunningdale candidates won 11 of the 12 seats.

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May A strike, backed by Loyalist para-militaries and politicians such as Paisley and Craig, was called in order to bring down the Sunningdale Agreement. After 14 days the Executive, which had unsuccessfully pressed for stronger action, recommended negotiation with the strikers but HMG declined to do so under duress. The Executive collapsed, the Assembly was prorogued, and direct rule resumed.

July The Northern Ireland Act provided for the continuation of direct rule, and the setting up of a Constitutional Convention.

December Protestant clergymen, acting entirely on their own initiative, met leading Provisionals at Feakle, Co Clare.

1975

February A Christmas and New Year PIRA ceasefire, which had subsequently been extended, and then lapsed, was turned into a permanent ceasefire (which has never formally been revoked).

Mr Rees set up telephonic Incident Centres to facilitate communication between Provisional Sinn Fein and Stormont Castle, and said that the Security Forces would respond to the prevailing level of violence.

May Elections to the Constitutional Convention. The anti-power-sharing and anti-Sunningdale UUUC won 46 of 78 seats.

September The UUUC majority Report of the Convention called for a strong majority rule Parliament with minor concessions to the minority.

December The last detainees released. (Detention, the successor of internment, was introduced in 1972).



1976

January The Secretary of State reconvened Convention to consider whether it could recommend a more widely acceptable system.

March The UUUC refused to modify its Report and the Convention was dissolved.

Prisoners convicted of offences committed after 1 March 1976 no longer admitted to Special Category.

August The Women's Peace Movement, later called the Peace People, was formed.

1977

May The United Unionist Action Council, supported by the UDA, Mr Paisley and Mr Baird, called a "constitutional stoppage" aimed at the restoration of majority rule and draconian security policy. It did not have widespread support, and also failed to dominate key areas of the economy. The strike petered out after two weeks.

May Northern Ireland's second elections to 26 District Councils held. Four major parties emerged (UUP; SDLP; DUP and APNI).

August HM The Queen visited Northern Ireland for two days as part of the Silver Jubilee tour of the United Kingdom.

November Following talks earlier in the year Mr Mason invited four main parties to consider an illustrative framework for interim devolution.

1978

April Prime Minister accepted Speaker's Conference recommendations for the increase of Northern Ireland's Commons representation.

May Adverse Report of an Amnesty International mission which visited Northern Ireland in November 1977 to investigate allegations of Police ill-treatment of suspects. HMG asked Judge Bennett to examine Police procedures.

1979

March Redistribution of Seats Act received Royal Assent.

March Bennett Committee Report (on Police Procedures) published.

March Murder of Mr Airey Neave by INLA.

May UK General Election; Mr Atkins, new Secretary of State.

June Mr Paisley, Mr Hume and Mr Taylor elected to European Assembly.

August Murder of Lord Mountbatten by PIRA

September Prime Minister met Taoiseach to discuss improved security co-operation.

September Pope's strenuous appeal for peace during visit to Republic of Ireland.

November Publication by Mr Atkins of Conference Working Paper.

1980

January Mr Atkins convened a Conference to explore ways of restoring locally elected government in Northern Ireland. Conference attended by leaders of the DUP, SDLP and Alliance: UUP declined.

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May Prime Minister met Taoiseach (Mr Haughey) in London to further relationship between Britain and the Republic.

July Publication of Government's constitutional proposals as a discussion document. This document recorded the agreement reached during the Conference on many of the less contentious aspects of a future system of government, and suggested alternative methods of providing a significant political role for minority representatives.

October 7 Republican prisoners in HMP Maze began hunger strike.

November Prime Minister told Commons that in the absence of agreement on devolved government in Northern Ireland, the Government would concentrate on making the administration of the Province more responsive to local needs. Nevertheless, the Government remained firmly committed in principle to the restoration of locally elected institutions acceptable to all sections of the Northern Ireland community.

December Prime Minister and Cabinet colleagues met Mr Haughey and other Irish Ministers in Dublin. Joint studies set in hand.

December Hunger strike called off.

#### 1981

January PIRA murder Sir Norman Stronge, former Speaker of NI Parliament, and his son, warning that other representatives of the "Loyalist ruling classes" were potential targets.

Dirty protest resumed in HMP Maze: threats of renewed hunger strike.

February Dr Paisley launches "Ulster Covenant" and "Carson Trail" Rallies as phases one and two of protest against Dublin Summit of December 1980 and the joint studies.

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Republican prisoners in HMP Maze announce new hunger strike from 1 March.

March Robert Sands commences hunger strike.

Visit of PM to Province; reaffirms constitutional position of NI and pursuit of better working relationship with the Republic.

Death of Mr Frank Maguire creates vacancy in Fermanagh/South Tyrone constituency. Robert Sands emerges as only nationalist candidate.

Last stage of phase two of Dr Paisley's "Carson Trail" culminates with indifferently attended rally at Stormont.

April Victory of Robert Sands, convicted PIRA terrorist and hunger striker in Fermanagh/South Tyrone by-election.

Phase three of "Carson Trail" inaugurated by Dr Paisley with midnight demonstrations in Province and rally in Glasgow.

Three further prisoners in HMP Maze join the hunger strike.

May Death of hunger striker Robert Sands, followed by Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh, Patrick O'Hara.

Anti-government demonstrations in Europe and US.

District Council elections in NI result in significant gains for Dr Paisley's DUP at expense of UUP, Alliance Party and minor unionist groupings; while SDLP vote holds up well against challenge of Irish Independence Party.

Taoiseach announces general election in Republic.

Prime Minister visits Province; repeats Government's determination to give no ground over political status.

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June A fifth prisoner in HMP Maze joins hunger strike and 9 Republican prisoners nominated to contest seats in general election in Irish Republic.

Irish general election removes Mr Haughey's Fianna Fail party's overall majority and opens way for Fine Gael/Labour Coalition under Dr FitzGerald.

Two protesting prisoners are elected to the Dail, both for border constituencies. They are Patrick Agnew and Kieran Doherty, a hunger striker.

July Secretary of State announces proposal to establish new Northern Ireland Council by administrative act and composed of persons elected to Westminster, to the European Parliament and to local councils. Cool response from parties.

Two more hunger strikers (Joseph McDonnell and Martin Hurson) die.

Hunger Strike supporters clash violently with Garda outside British Embassy in Dublin.

August Deaths of hunger strikers Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty (elected T D for Cavan/Monaghan in the Republic's general election) and Thomas McIlwee.

Owen Carron (Sands' election agent) elected MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone with increased majority with SDLP again deciding not to contest the seat.

John Hume informs Secretary of State that his party would not be taking part in Northern Ireland Council ostensibly because of continuation of hunger strike impasse and lack of "Irish dimension" in the Council.

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September Mr James Prior became Secretary of State on 14 September.

Further weakening of the hunger strike evident - two voluntarily ended their strike.

October End of hunger strike announced on 3 October.

29 October Mr Prior announced that Northern Ireland Council proposal will not be proceeded with.

November Prime Minister met Dr FitzGerald in London on 6 November. Joint Studies reviewed. Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council announced.

Assassination of the Rev Robert Bradford MP on 14 November led to a day of action organised by Ian Paisley on 23 November, specifically to set up a "third force".

### 1982

January Inquiry set up into allegations of offences against boys committed at the Kincora Children's Home.

February Kincora inquiry collapsed on 12 February when three of the five members resigned.

The Secretary of State held talks with local political parties on his proposals for an Assembly.

March Secretary of State stated on 11 March that he would proceed with the proposals to set up an elected Assembly.

April The White Paper "Northern Ireland: A Framework for Devolution" (Cmnd 8541) published.

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May Second Reading of the Northern Ireland Bill took place on 10 May.

June Lengthy and controversial Committee Stage on the Northern Ireland Bill. Bill's Commons' passage subject to guillotine.

July Bill progresses in Lords and becomes law.

August SDLP announced its intention to contest the Assembly elections, but to boycott the Assembly. The IIP announced its intention to boycott the elections.

September Nominations for the Assembly closed on 28 September. 184 candidates to contest 78 seats in 12 constituencies.

October Assembly elections took place on 20 October. UUP won 26 seats; DUP 21; SDLP 14; and the Alliance 10. Sinn Fein took 5 seats with about 10% of the first preference votes, and 2 seats were won by Independent Unionists.

November The Northern Ireland Assembly met for the first time on 11 November.

December Allocation of Departmental Committee Chairmanships and Deputy Chairmanships in the Assembly announced. UUP dissatisfied with allocation and refused to participate in committees.

### 1983

February UUP boycott of Assembly Committees lifted on 3 February.

Secretary of State met the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Barry, in London on 1 February, at which they agreed on the "desirability of close co-operation between the two Governments".

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On 23 February, the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament decided to commission a report on the political situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr Livingstone (GLC Leader) visited Belfast on 26/27 February at the invitation of Sinn Fein.

March The Assembly established a "Security and Home Affairs Committee".

May Assembly debate on devolution; no progress. Forum for a New Ireland convened in Dublin, with SDLP participating along with the three main Southern Parties. DUP and UUP hostile, and declined to attend, as did Alliance.

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

June 1983