



2011 ANNUAL RELEASES

1981 files – Highlights List

A full list of the files will be available

Introduction

The annual release of selected official files continues against a background of greater public access through the Freedom of Information Act balanced against the need to protect personal information. The FOI Act (2000) created a new access to information regime and all records were reviewed in accordance with both that Act and the Data Protection Act.

Records continue to be brought forward for release as they approach 30 years of age. This involves the referral of the files to the Responsible Authority for sensitivity review. This entails a page by page examination to ensure that a record contains nothing sensitive as defined by the FOI Act and DP Act.

This year's annual release covers official files with a terminal date of 1981. Of the 874 departmental files examined, 24 were subject to full closure, with an additional 64 subject to partial closure or redaction (blanking out).

Partial closure involves the removal of a limited number of papers from the file that have been deemed as exempt from the right to know under FOI. To facilitate the release of as much information as possible, redaction can be used to blank out sensitive data within individual documents that would otherwise prevent release. All information withheld under this procedure must conform to the exemptions contained in the FOI Act. In the majority of cases, the reason for extended closure was the application of section 40 – the personal information exemption – of the FOI Act. This means that personal information is exempt from the right to know if it would breach the Data Protection principles.

1981 Highlighted Files

Central Secretariat

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|---|
| CENT/1/10/13 | 1979-1981 | Republic of Ireland – Annual Review for 1980 File includes a review by the British Ambassador to Dublin, Sir Leonard Figg, on the political and economic situation in the Republic of Ireland |
| CENT/1/10/29 | 1981-1981 | Stormont Estate – The Holding of Demonstrations, Rallies, etc. File contains a letter from Private Secretary, Central Secretariat on the legalities of allowing Rev. Ian Paisley to hold a demonstration in Stormont Grounds, March 1981. It examined the 'legal and practical implications of the possibility that Dr Paisley might wish to address those gathered together from the balcony of Parliament Buildings (as he did when an assembly member in 1974). I believe a tractorcade was denied access to the estate during the UUUC 'Strike' of 1976 (?) 1977?'... |
| CENT/1/10/25 | 1981-1981 | Constitutional Developments – March–April 1981 File includes a letter from Rev. Ian Paisley, condemning the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, for talks between the British and Republic of Ireland governments, and Mrs Thatcher's reply, dated 6 March 1981; notes of meetings with Church leaders; NIO political review bulletins highlighting key events and developments; papers and reports relating to the start of the Hunger Strike at the Maze; reports from the Civil Representatives; and papers/reports relating to the Fermanagh/South Tyrone by-election. |
| CENT/1/10/36A | 1981-1981 | Constitutional Developments – May 1981 File contains notes of meetings with NI political representatives; minutes of meetings with the Chief Constable, RUC and General Officer Commanding, concerning the Hunger Strike and arrangements in the event of a prisoner's death; reports on the death of Bobby Sands; NIO reports on the Hunger Strike and situation in NI; letter from Lord Hailsham to Humphrey Atkins, Secretary of State, with his view on the NI problem; and political analysis by NIO of NI local council election results. |

1981 Highlighted Files

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------|--|
| CENT/1/10/52 | 1981-1981 | Constitutional Developments – July 1981 File contains NIO weekly reports relating to the Maze Hunger Strike, political developments, events in Dublin, Great Britain and the United States of America; and minutes of meetings with Chief Constable, General Officer Commanding and NIO Permanent Under Secretary, reporting on key events. |
| CENT/1/10/62 | 1981-1981 | Constitutional Developments – August 1981 – September 1981 File contains NIO reports relating to the Maze Hunger Strike, prisons, political developments; notes of meetings between NI political parties including DUP, OUP and SDLP and the Secretary of State, Humphrey Atkins; and notes of meetings with the International Committee of the Red Cross. |
| CENT/1/10/86A | 1981-1981 | Constitutional Developments October 1981 File contains minutes of a meeting between the Secretary of State and Cardinal Tomas O’Fiaich and Father Denis Faul about the Hunger Strike, dated 30 September 1981; and NIO reports on the situation in the prisons and political developments. |
| CENT/1/10/66 | 1981-1981 | Hunger Strike File refers to the debate between various Government Departments (Finance and Central Secretariat primarily), on the ramifications of the violence resulting from the ongoing Special Category Status protests. In a confidential memo from the Central Secretariat’s Political Affairs Division, 17 August 1981, it was stated that a prominent report (on local effects of the violence) ‘does not attempt to assess the economic costs (for example, to inward investment) nor the consequences for HMG’s relations with the Republic or the US. Nor is it designed to be a concealed recommendation that we should change our stance on the ‘five demands.’ The picture it paints is not a happy one. Even if the hunger strike were to end tomorrow, its consequences will be with us for a long time to come...’ |

1981 Highlighted Files

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------|---|
| CENT/1/10/93A | 1981-1981 | Constitutional Developments – November 1981 File contains notes of a meeting between the Secretary of State and a Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) delegation lead by Peter Robinson, discussing security and constitutional matters, dated 3 November 1981; NIO reviews of the situation in NI covering prisons, political situation, etc., record of a meeting between UK and Republic of Ireland Governments, London, dated 6 November 1981; paper submitted by Sir Robin Day to the Secretary of State on the political situation and possible solutions, dated 9 November 1981; and notes of meetings with NI political parties, church leaders, etc. |
| CENT/1/10/88 | 1981-1981 | Secretary of State's meeting with Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, Monday 19 October 1981. File contains correspondence (16 October 1981) between Political Affairs Division (NIO) and Secretary of State, regarding meetings with the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. 'Since the deputation are going to raise economic as well as security matters, it may be worth noting that the UUP Conference on 23/24 October will debate a resolution from the Belfast Grand Orange Lodge calling on the Government to treat the whole of the Province as a 'special hardship area' and create a NI 'think tank' similar to that established in Merseyside after the Toxteth rioting. This is an indication of the extensive concern which has developed about the Province's economy: customarily, the Orange Order sticks to well-worn security and constitutional issues...' |
| CENT/1/10/91 | 1981-1981 | Constitutional Developments – December 1981 File contains papers on The Third Force; notes of meetings to discuss constitutional developments; minutes of meetings with NI political parties; reports compiled by NIO reviewing events, developments, and the security situation. |
| CENT/1/8/44 | 1981-1981 | Anglo-Irish Economics Co-operation – Ministerial meetings File includes briefings on the Prime Minister and Taoiseach meetings on security, economic co-operation and the Hunger Strike. 'Mr Haughey will no doubt not want to be drawn much beyond his position as at 25 November as a consequence of his talks with the Prime Minister. If so, there is no point in seeking |

outright condemnation on his part of the claim for political status. He could be pressed, however, to lend his voice to those that have already spoken out against the strike becoming the focus for fresh inter-sectarian violence...'

- CENT/1/10/86A** **1981-1981** **Constitutional developments - October 1981**
File refers to the developing Special Category Status Protest 'Hunger Strikes,' amongst a wide variety of other pressing issues (meetings with the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and preparations for an Anglo Irish summit). Contains previously *Restricted* document assessing the situation following the Republican statement announcing the cessation of the 'Hunger Strike,' and the political fall out on all sides. 'On the Unionist side, Dr Paisley predictably tried to exploit the statement to whip up emotive fears of a sell out to the Provisionals. Mr Molyneaux and other OUP spokesmen echoed this line...although it is worth noting that John McMichael, head of the UDA's political front group, the UDLP, was reported as welcoming reforms "which benefited all prisoners"...a number of UUP councillors (and even one or two in the DUP) have privately expressed themselves satisfied with the Government's action and have discounted Paisley's posturing...'
- CENT/1/6/26A** **1977-1981** **Homosexual Offences Order**
File contains papers relating to the Government's proposals to bring the law in NI in line with GB at the time, and the case taken to the European Court of Human Rights, at which the Government were found to be in breach of Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

Department of Education

- ED/13/2/544** **1981** **Integrated Education in NI**
File contains papers on the ongoing debate over integrated education, and attempts to encourage Government to look beyond traditional political and security solutions to the 'Troubles.' Proponents stressed how integrated education could address many social ills, through increased tolerance, social interaction, shared goals and equality of status of children in NI.

ED/13/2/549 **1980-1981** **School Closures Due to Civil Unrest**
File examines Government attempts to sustain the education of young people (through encouraging school authorities to remain open during the violence resulting from the ongoing 'Hunger Strikes'), whilst at the same time conceding that schools often had no choice but to close, whether due to a school's proximity to violence, or actual/perceived paramilitary threats to schools and staff.

Northern Ireland Office

NIO/10/13/2A **1981** **Red Cross – International Visit 1981**
File contains the papers relating to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visits to Northern Ireland's main prisons in July 1981. HMP Belfast, HMP Armagh, HMP Magilligan and HMP Maze (including Maze Compound and Maze Cellular) were assessed by the ICRC, and prisoners and staff/Governors were interviewed. The visits attempted to address a combination of basic prisoner issues (such as reducing overcrowded visiting rooms, increasing visiting time for children, washing facilities, etc.) but of course the key issue for the Red Cross visitors was to focus on the ongoing Hunger Strike (previously, Republican political prisoners in HMP Maze Cellular and HMP Armagh had asserted five key demands relating to the withdrawal of Special Category Status, and were planning to initiate a hunger strike on 27th October). ICRC raised the concern that further deaths would result from the continuing hunger/thirst protest (against the Government's withdrawal of Special Category Status). ICRC urged constructive dialogue between Republican political prisoners and their representatives and the Government, and offered to act as a 'humanitarian intermediary.'

NIO/12/254 **1981-1985** **Prisons – Hunger Strike. Meetings in connection with the Hunger Strike**
File contains the papers relating to various matters arising out of the developing Hunger Strikes, including an (NIO proposed) review of NI Prisons and meetings with a number of individuals and interest groups. In the minutes of one meeting on 26th August 1981 between Mr Alison and Mr Michaud, during which the security situation was discussed. 'Mr Alison thought that, despite the upsurge in violence, there was some encouraging aspects...Each successive hunger strike

had a diminishing impact and street rioting was on a diminishing scale...It was not in the interests of the terrorist organisations to shoot and bomb, since this reduced the impact of the hunger strike deaths...'

| | | |
|------------|-----------|--|
| NIO/12/253 | 1981-1986 | <p>Prisons – Protest Action. Protest Action arising from claim to Special Category Status – Hunger Strike – briefings for Minister</p> <p>File relates to various meetings and briefings arising out of the developing Hunger Strikes, including the UK Government's reaction to the International Committee of the Red Cross's report on the Hunger Strikes, which the Prime Minister felt was 'irresponsible.'</p> |
| NIO/12/206 | 1981 | <p>Prisons – International Red Cross. Meetings and Correspondence (including Protest Papers)</p> <p>File relates to meetings and briefings between UK Government and the International Committee of the Red Cross, arising out of the ICRC report on the Northern Ireland Prisons, and primarily focussing on the developing Hunger Strikes. In the minutes of one meeting, Mr Alison (NIO) thanked the ICRC for having come to Northern Ireland, but asked the question of whether ICRC had 'formed an impression on the hunger strikers' thinking – were they really concerned with marginal technical changes in the regime or were their minds geared to more sweeping ambitions? Mr Schmidt (ICRC) said that it was difficult to answer this because those most closely implicated, ie those on the protest, would not speak to the ICRC and it was not possible to know if the view of the hunger strikers themselves was representative...the ICRC felt that there were few problems in Northern Ireland prisons of a physical or material nature...but there were tremendous problems of a psychological and political nature, leading to a sense of tension and struggle...the prison scene in Northern Ireland was very young...'</p> |
| NIO/12/202 | 1981 | <p>Prisons – Hunger Strike. Second Hunger Strike – Irish Governments Involvement Dublin Embassy Papers.</p> <p>File relates to communications between the UK and Republic of Ireland Governments, including most notably some exchanges between Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Northern Ireland Office, and</p> |

the Irish Government. In his letter of 19th October 1981 to Lord Carrington (Secretary of State, FCO), the British Ambassador (Sir Leonard Figg) stated that 'the hunger strike which began on 1 March and ended on 3 October must have been one of the most difficult periods on Anglo-Irish relations for many years... (Mr Haughey) made clear that he did not think we were using sufficient cunning and dexterity in seeming to make concessions without actually doing so and thereby heading off the strike. This attitude was also shared by his successor...'

NIO/12/194A 1981

Prisons – Protest Action. The Republican Hunger Strikers 1981 – Medical Information and Weekly Bulletins

File contains papers concerning the developing Hunger Strikes. These papers largely consist of weekly bulletins on events occurring outside and within HMP Maze (Cellular) and HMP Armagh, such as notes of visits by various people (prisoners' families, their solicitors and TDs from the Irish Government). The file also contains regular updates on the rapidly deteriorating medical conditions of the Republican prisoners on hunger strike, including the entry on 5th May confirming the death of Robert Sands.

NIO/12/196A 1981

Prisons – Protest Action. Protest Action Arising from Claim to Special Category Status – Second Hunger Strike (1981)

File contains papers concerning the developing Hunger Strikes, including an appeal from the leader of 'Republican Prisoners of War' to 'All Irish Trades Unions' to support the action of the hunger strikers and NIO assessments of the protest (illustrating the NIO's opinions on the likelihood of success for the protesting prisoners, the actual motivations of the prisoners, their support both within their own paramilitary structure and in the greater public and ultimately, the NIO political / security strategies to deal with the protest). File also contains copies of correspondence discovered in prisoners' cells, between various senior Republican paramilitaries in the 'H Blocks' regarding the ongoing protests.

- NIO12/121A** **1981** **Prisons – Complaints. Condition at HMP Maze – Correspondence from Archbishop O’Fiaich**
File contains a telegram from Cardinal O’Fiaich to Mrs Thatcher, about the hunger strike, dated 13 May 1981; and 6 page letter from 10 Downing Street about a meeting held on 1 July 1981 between Mrs Thatcher and Cardinal O’Fiaich, about the hunger strike.
- NIO/12/197A** **1981** **Prisons – Hunger Strike. Events following the Death of Robert Gerard Sands**
File contains a note of a meeting between Mrs Thatcher, British Prime Minister and John Hume, Leader of SDLP, about the hunger strike, dated 13 April 1981; note of a meeting between Mrs Thatcher and the Irish Ambassador to London, dated 13 May 1981, about the hunger strike; and a draft letter from Secretary of State, Humphrey Atkins to USA Vice-President George Bush, dated 3 July 1981 and reply from Vice-President Bush, dated 15 July 1981
- NIO/12/204** **1981** **Prisons – Protest Action. Protest Action Arising from Claim to Special Category Status – Action needed if the Protest ends**
File contains papers relating to arrangements for the cessation of the Hunger Strikes. This includes plans to de-segregate protesting prisoners (and reintegrate them with the other prisoners), the examination of possible restoration of remission lost as a consequence of ‘non conformity’ and assessing former protestors for fitness for prison work and training.

Department of Health & Social Services

- HSS/32/1/15/9A** **1979-1981** **Bennett Committee Recommendations**
File relates to the outcomes of the *Bennett Report* (researchers note: Judge H.C. Bennett QC was tasked with investigating conditions in security forces ‘Holding Centres’ in Northern Ireland). Papers in this file focus primarily on the particular recommendation of Bennett that ‘Linked Medical Records’ be introduced, to ensure that any alleged physical abuse or torture by security forces against suspected terrorists would be accurately recorded and supplied to any subsequent medical investigation.

HSS/32/1/10/10A 1972-1981

Hunger/Thirst Strikers – Policy

File contains the views of Lord Donaldson, Master of the Rolls, who stated that 'We should stick to the policy practiced in this country for 30 years, and avoid forceable feeding...I believe a hunger striker who will actively starve himself to death to be a very rare bird, and the knowledge that no relief can be expected would be sufficient to break most strikers...'

(Researchers note: Lord Donaldson, Master of the Rolls, became involved with the moral debate on Hunger Strikes, by asserting that the right of the patient to self determination, in an absolute refusal of treatment, was paramount in the overall debate, thus precluding the possibility of any subsequent intervention by medical practitioners or other authorities).