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29th April 1986

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*MT*

*Prime Minister 2*

*DLW*

*29/4*

*at New*

*Dear Douglas,*

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 17th April 1986 to the Prime Minister outlining how you intend to handle the industrial action being threatened by prison officers.

The possibility of military assistance in such a dispute obviously lies at the upper end of the spectrum of action which you may have in mind. But I am confident that if the need arose we would be able to identify suitable camped accommodation which could be used in an emergency as a temporary prison to house prisoners. Although no formal contingency planning has been carried out for such an eventuality, our preliminary assessment is that Rolleston Camp in Wiltshire, which was used once before, in 1980/81, could be made available to take about 375 prisoners. We have not yet identified a second camp, but a search is being conducted for a suitable location. Rolleston

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP



Camp could be manned and made ready within about 2 weeks of a formal request from you. However, we would require longer notice for the second camp (probably about 3 or 4 weeks) because a new camp would require a greater degree of engineer planning and effort to set up; (an external perimeter fence would probably have to be erected and internal security improvements would have to be made).

The Service manpower required to meet this commitment would amount to about 250 personnel for each camp, of whom about 170 would be employed on general security and support duties; the balance consisting of Royal Military Police or Military Provost Staff Corps personnel. The provision of this Service manpower would of course add to the Army's problems of overstretch (which, of course, have already been exacerbated by the need to reinforce Northern Ireland with two additional infantry battalions and Royal Engineers) but would, I believe, be manageable. There is, however, a limit to the amount of Royal Military Police and Military Provost Staff Corps manpower which could be provided. To find manpower for a third camp would entail the closure of the Military Corrective Training Centre at Colchester which would be most undesirable. Primarily for this reason, together with the pressure on Service training camps which invariably arises in the period ahead when Territorial Army and regular summer training is at a peak, I think it is important that your planning should be based on the use of only



2 military camps with a capacity for dealing with about 750 or so prisoners in total. And all these arrangements naturally pre-suppose that prison governors would be available to oversee such camps and that only the lowest category of prisoners would be sent to military camps.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, Willie Whitelaw, Quintin Hailsham, Nigel Lawson, John Biffen, Norman Tebbit, Tom King, David Young, Malcolm Rifkind and Michael Havers, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours truly,

George Younger

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