

JTA/MA

11 August 1988

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland  
Private Office  
Stormont Castle  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST

The tragic events of the last couple of weeks have predictably brought strident demands for the implementation of harsher security measures, including the re-introduction of internment. This is of course so predictable that one is tempted to suggest that it may be part of the intention of the violence. I say this because I believe that the Republican Movement is in some disarray and desperately needs a unifying cause. The history of the early 1970's demonstrates without question that internment without trial was the single most important factor in the building up of the Provisional IRA.

Internment is always selective, and indeed some of the figures that have been suggested are remarkably close to the actual numbers lifted in August 1971. The policy was utterly catastrophic then, and would be so again.

My predecessor, Oliver Napier, argued energetically with the then Secretary of State, against taking such a step, and he was proved tragically right. When the Prime Minister rejected suggestions of internment, I was a little worried that her rejection was hedged about with such caveats as to not exclude completely the possibility of such a line of action. It is this, rather than a belief that you could be giving any rational consideration to the matter, which leads me to express to you in writing the absolute certainty and unanimity with which I and my Party colleagues are opposed to any reintroduction of detention without trial, however it is couched or described. Instead there should be a continuation of the firm, resolute, and I trust increasingly efficient security policy which you have adopted in conjunction with the Republic of Ireland.

In respect of Party suggestions on policing, I will be meeting tomorrow with the Deputy Chief Constable to put forward some constructive proposals.

Dr John T Alderdice  
PARTY LEADER