

Top PB

JEH 9/2

Disputed
with Ho.



Prime Minister

Life
JMS/12-

CONFIDENTIAL - POLICY

To be aware. There are

the main cases then
establishing about. No is
about to weigh in against
whole life tariffs, but
don't think we can really
influence the decision to political

Prime Minister

BALCOMBE STREET GANG - TARIFF SETTING

I have been considering the question of appropriate tariffs in the cases of four Irish prisoners (Duggan, Butler, O'Connell & Doherty) who were convicted in 1977 of the murders of six people in separate attacks (in which nine people died), and numerous other serious terrorist related offences.

2 Given the nature of their offences and taking into account the tariffs set in England and Wales for other crimes of an equally callous and horrific nature, involving the serial killing of several innocent victims, I have decided that the only appropriate tariff in each case is that of whole life.

3 There has been considerable pressure for the tariffs in these cases to be set since the four prisoners concerned have all applied to be repatriated to the Republic of Ireland. The setting of their tariffs will allow their repatriation applications to be referred to the Republic for consideration. However, I am conscious that the length of the tariffs may attract criticism in some circles and it is therefore possible that the decisions may be linked to, and have an effect on, the peace talks.

4 Subject to your views and those of Mo Mowlam, my preference is to inform the four prisoners of their tariffs as soon as possible.

5 I further propose that to ensure the Irish Government is not wrong footed by the news of the tariffs my officials should contact their counterparts in the Republic with news of the decisions just prior to formal notification to the prisoners themselves of these decisions.

6 I am sending a copy of this minute to Mo Mowlam.

Jack Shaw

19¹⁵
November 1997

CONFIDENTIAL - POLICY

reasons, at
least given the
intelligence gathered
in the box.

We need to
take a couple of
days more to
reflect on this
but, subject to
that, we will
probably have to go
ahead as Jack
suggests. JMS/12-