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Secret

I went North last Friday, 29th October, 1971, and came back yesterday, 2nd November, 1971. Among the people with whom I had conversations were Mr. Gerry Fitt, M.P., Mr. Paddy Devlin, M.P., Mr. Austin Currie, Mr. John Hume, Mr. O. Napier, Co-Chairman of the Alliance Party, Mr. James Doherty, former Chairman of the Nationalist Party, Mr. P. Duffy, Solicitor, Mr. Liam Hourican, RTE, Belfast and a number of other people. The opinions expressed to me were as follows:-

1. The SDLP will not talk until internment ends. This is not so much intransigence, of which they have been accused, but as a considered view on their part that the effect of internment accompanied by torture and brutality, British Army's behaviour etc., on the non-unionist population is such that they would lose their influence altogether if they agreed to talks while internment lasts.
2. With one exception, all my contacts believe that the IRA cannot now be beaten. The exception is Mr. Paddy Devlin, who gave me a detailed run down of the situation of the Provisional IRA in Belfast and thinks that they can be worn down in that area.
3. There was no exception to the belief that Mr. Brian Faulkner will not survive beyond the end of the year.
4. There seems to be a growing, but not precisely stated, feeling that the question of Irish unity is now a live issue and that no solution can be found that does not take it into account.
5. All my contacts encourage the idea of taking the UK before the European Commission on Human Rights. In this respect Mr. Pitt offered to prepare the way at Westminster in the sense of telling senior Labour politicians including, if possible, Mr. Wilson, that any such move by the Irish Government should be seen as an unavoidable response to the policies and methods currently being operated by the Conservative Government and not as an attack on Britain nor the British people. Mr. O. Napier agreed to let me have Affidavits from a number of his clients who have alleged brutality by the British Army. I am not sure that he will carry through on this promise but, if there is no objection, I will write to him personally to remind him of it.
6. Another point to be noted is that Mr. Paisley's disclosure - that direct rule is round the corner - has not resulted in the usual immediate challenge by the right-wing to the British Government. It almost seems as if they are resigned to this or that they hate Mr. Faulkner even more. Mr. Boal confirmed on Monday, to one of my most reliable contacts, that Mr. Paisley's source is a member of the British Government. The question of the "unimpeachability" of the source seems less important to me than the lack of right-wing reaction to the suggestion itself.
7. Conditions in Belfast are extremely bad. There are hardly any street lights in Catholic ghetto areas. Ardernstown is a no-go area. British Army armoured cars patrol the periphery as they do in the Ardoyne area; this leads to nightly sniping at them, to no great consequence.
8. Moderate leaders have given up trying to influence anybody so far as I could judge and even the most pacific of them have now begun to say that they ~~are averted for~~ ^{have averted for} the continuance of violence as long as Stormont exists. It is clear that Mr. Faulkner's credibility is virtually nil, almost in every part of the community.

Ag
3/11/1971.