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Meeting with Gordon McMullan, Church of Ireland
Bishop of Down and Dromore, 8 December 1993

Gordon McMullan, a regular contact, is from a working class East Belfast Unionist background (the Short Strand). Prior to his ordination, he worked in the shipyard and in management. He was formerly Bishop of Clogher. He is articulate, assertive, takes pride in having "street cred" (as he puts it) and voices the concerns of the average Unionist as he sees them. The following points of interest arose in our discussion:

- he was characteristically bleak about the likely continuation of Loyalist paramilitary violence. Since the UDA, in his view, have no political agenda, it is difficult to determine the precise circumstances in which they would cease their sectarian violence. He was interviewed earlier in the day by the BBC about the murder by the UDA of a Catholic (McClay) who lived nearby and told me that he found it difficult to avoid saying that Loyalist violence is thriving in the current atmosphere of uncertainty about the future. He told me that he did not say this because he abhors and wishes to give no appearance of in any way condoning Loyalist violence;
- He sees little evidence that the middle class Unionist population is more given to supporting the paramilitaries. That said, he suspects that, if the Loyalists strike at targets in this jurisdiction, Unionists, while not supporting such attacks, will express little surprise or even dismay. As for financial support, he believes that middle class Unionists in the

shape of businessmen are being pressured, perhaps in a more overt way than previously, into making involuntary donations to Loyalist paramilitaries;

- He voiced concern that the current search for an end to the violence might end in formulations which concede "too much" to the nationalist agenda. He then went over ground he has travelled before e.g. the perceived snub to the UUP when they travelled to Dublin last year, the fears that the nationalist tradition are forcing the pace without due regard for the consequences, and what he believes is the failure of the NIO to understand Loyalist concerns;
- I summarised and explained the objectives and priorities of the Government. I confirmed to him that the Taoiseach and Tánaiste were at one in their determination to test this window of opportunity to bring about a lasting cessation of violence. He expressed interest in the twin principles which attach to the search for an end to violence, set out by the Tánaiste in his Washington speech (i.e. no legitimising of violence; and the principle of consent);
- interestingly, he said that, in his experience, ordinary Unionist people are more open to the search for an end to violence than Unionist politicians, essentially because they are war-weary. In his view Unionists will be suspicious of concessions to the nationalist side (which he believes will be seen by many as gains by the IRA). He takes the point that a successful peace process can boost the political process but only, in his view, if it clearly meets Unionist fears and concerns;
- the key requirement, in his judgement, is that there be no hint of joint authority in whatever is agreed by the

Taoiseach and the Prime Minister. Joint authority in any shape or form would be unacceptable to the bulk of the Unionist community and would excite the Loyalist paramilitaries. Whatever is agreed must be balanced and should include, as a reassurance to Unionists, an explicit declaration of intent as regards changing Articles 2 and 3 (Articles 2 and 3 are a regular hobby horse of Bishop McMullan); and a clear explanation of the principle of consent as it applies to the people of Northern Ireland. In his view, mistrust in the Unionist community, exacerbated by the revelations of British dealings with the IRA, is such that whatever measures are agreed must be clearly explained.



Declan Kelleher
10 December 1993

A1440

cc PST
PSS

Alfonso

Dr. F. Murray, DT Taoiseach

Dr. N. Donoghue, DT Taoiseach

Dr. T. Dalton, DT Justice

John Hume

Mr. Hume