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Reference Code: 2021/96/6

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Meeting with Paddy McGrory, Belfast, 30 September 1994

I met Paddy McGrory on a recent visit to Belfast. The following points emerged:

Concerns over post-ceasefire situation

- McGrory, who is well-informed on attitudes within the Republican Movement in Belfast and who is close to Adams, expressed concern at current local feedback on the post-ceasefire situation. Frustration at the slow pace of the British response has shaded into critical mutterings by a few about Adams and the Sinn Féin leadership;
- A particular source of concern on the ground is what is seen to be the failure of the British to alter policing and British Army postures over and above the initial and essentially cosmetic package of measures (replacement of helmets by berets, etc.) There was a strong expectation that the British would start to dismantle the fortified outposts (this had been confidently expected to take place within a week of the ceasefire), and effectively end checkpoints, Army patrols and the DMSU presence within Republican West Belfast. Instead, the continuation by the British Army of what is seen as an essentially combat ready posture has evoked negative reactions;
- The initial euphoria at the ceasefire in West Belfast has passed. He detects no appetite for a return to the armed struggle but he does detect growing local anger and frustration, exacerbated by the perception that the British Government are even more indulgent to Unionism than before;

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- He believes that Adams's absence abroad has removed a steadying effect within West Belfast;
- McGrory voiced again his concern that the street protests organised by Sinn Fein may prove difficult to control, and in the current circumstances of frustration, could spill over into a flashpoint;

IRA

- He understands that the IRA recently informed the Sinn Fein leadership that they would not disband and that they would not dump arms. (This, he said, was in line with the pre-ceasefire discussions which took place between "political" and "military" figures at the end of July). The IRA are using the new circumstances to downsize, and in particular to work towards a slimmer, leaner approach. They have used the opportunity to get rid of people they didn't want or don't need. He opined that the recent punishment beatings in West Belfast (which, he has said to me in the past, are locally popular as a means of controlling hoods and joyriders) may be part of keeping the IRA alert. (Note: Brian Feeney is also essentially of this view, pointing out that it takes a group of men, lookouts, a car and some organisation to arrange beatings);

Policing

- He has been asked for his view by 'Counterpoint' on policing. His view is a variation of the line that, given the unacceptability of the RUC, there should be local unarmed police drawn from the community, with the RUC remaining at a Northern Ireland-wide level. He had discussed this in very brief terms with Adams who told McGrory that Sinn Fein could not advocate this (i.e. the retention of the RUC) but he had no difficulty with McGrory saying it:

Prisons

- Prisoners in the Maze are particularly watchful of current developments. Already McGrory has detected some unhappiness at the slow pace of British response on

issues such as cross-border roads and a drawdown of the security force presence. (Note: This corresponds with what we have heard from other sources). He believes that the official side's approach to Christmas parole will be crucial. In addition to expectations of generosity in such parole arrangements, he has picked up an expectation that prisoners with less than a year to serve should not have to return to prison after their Christmas parole.

Gibraltar case

- He is working on his submission to the European Court, who are due to consider the case in February. It appears that the Court will not call witnesses (e.g. the soldiers and the Gibraltar policemen and officials involved). McGrory is pleased to have got this far, but now concedes that the odds are against any further progress;

Right to Silence and denial of access to legal advice

- John (Aldo) Murray was a co-accused of Danny Morrison in the case in which Morrison, Murray and several others were convicted in 1991 of falsely imprisoning an RUC informer. Murray took a case to the European Commission of Human Rights complaining that he was deprived of his right to silence and of access to a solicitor. The Commission, in a significant judgement, has recently released its finding that Murray's case is admissible before the European Court. The decision has caused uncertainty and discussion within the Northern Ireland judiciary. According to McGrory, Brian Kerr (the Judge in the Ballymurphy Seven case, where denial of access to legal advice is a central element) has indicated that he would prefer not to give a judgement until he knows the outcome of the European Court's deliberations.



Declan Kelleher

3 October, 1994

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