

CONFIDENTIAL

RECEIVED
16 NOV 1983
MUFAX ROOM
STORMONT HOUSE

HEAD OF THE N.I.
POLICE SERVICE

313/11

PCO R. 12/4

(8)

Note of a Meeting between the Secretary of State and Mr Molyneaux in NIO London on 15 November 1983

① Mr. Evans 17/11 ② Mr. Caffrey ③ PCO

The Secretary of State had a meeting with Mr Molyneaux in London on 15 November following the murder of Mr Charles Armstrong in Armagh City on 14 November.

Mr Molyneaux said that many of his Unionist colleagues had been very upset by Mr Armstrong's murder. There was talk among them of marches and rallies. There would no doubt be high feeling at the Unionist Party Conference at the weekend. He took a more rational approach and had calmed things down. For his part he was concerned that it was not always appreciated that Armagh City was a frontier town. The area to the south was a "no go" area and not patrolled by the security forces. Following Mr Carroll's murder, he feared there might be a resumption of sectarian murders. But in his view it was a mistake to suggest that victory over terrorists was impossible. This only affected the morale of the security forces.

Mr Molyneaux said that he believed RUC Officers at Superintendent and Inspector level were misinterpreting the Secretary of State's policy decisions on the use of resources, in particular on overtime. He had publicly supported the Secretary of State's view that unnecessary overtime should be stopped, without curtailing the operational effectiveness of the force. He believed, however, that crudely imposed restrictions were effecting operational activity, particularly in an emergency such as the Maze escape. He had it on the best authority that the call-out of one RUC unit had been delayed for two hours on the evening of the escape to avoid overtime payments.

The Secretary of State said that he would arrange for Mr Molyneaux's assessment of the situation in Armagh City to be passed onto the Chief Constable. On overtime restrictions, he had made it clear that they should not affect operational activity, and he had reinforced this on the evening of the Maze escape. He would,

however, seek an opportunity to raise this again with the Chief Constable to ensure that it was not being misunderstood.

In continued discussion, the following points were made:

- i) Hennessy Report. Mr Molyneaux said that he understood that a few weeks before the escape IRA prisoners had attempted to overpower officers in one of the H Blocks. The officers had regained control and the prisoners had been locked up. A short time later, the prison authorities in the NIO had intervened and insisted that the men be unlocked to continue association. As a layman, this seemed to him most unwise and inappropriate. He thought the point might be covered in Sir James' Report. The Secretary of State said that he was not aware of the facts of this incident, but he understood that such matters were for the governor to judge in the light of the circumstances at the time. Sir James was expected to report on the Maze escape by the end of the month or early December. He had had no recent contact with Sir James.
- ii) Assembly Prisons Debate. Mr Molyneaux said that his Party continued to oppose segregation in prisons. The DUP's arguments were not credible. The DUP motion for debate in the Assembly on 16 November was not acceptable, and it was likely they would vote against it.
- iii) Converted Terrorists. Mr Molyneaux said that the loyalist campaign against converted terrorists was only playing into the hands of the Provisional IRA. He supported their use.
- iv) Kincora. The Secretary of State said that an inquiry under the 1921 Act would not be acceptable to his Cabinet colleagues, nor he believed, the House of Commons.

But he was committed to some sort of judicial inquiry, and he hoped to set up a judicial inquiry under the 1972 Social Services Order, with some powers of subpoena. Mr Molyneaux said that he thought this would be acceptable. He saw some advantage in appointing a retired English judge to conduct the inquiry. While the political pressure for an inquiry would continue, he doubted if there was as much public interest in one as some people thought.

In further discussion, Mr Molyneaux said that a motion to devolve local government powers to the Assembly ~~will~~^{was} likely to be debated and carried at the Unionist Conference. He would advise that this was no more than one possible option since he wished to retain room for manoeuvre. His own favoured solution was to develop local government in which the SDLP and Sinn Fein already took part, rather than the Assembly. He recognised that unless Unionists and the government could find a way of helping the SDLP, they were in danger of going under. The SDLP would be finally outflanked if Sinn Fein decided to take their seats in the Assembly, even if only in a token way. But the SDLP could not join for fear of being accused of being Castle Catholics. When they had last met, the Secretary of State and he had agreed that there was little prospect for political developments until after the Forum had reported. Because of the delay in producing the Forum Report, he now considered that things could not be left until then. Nor was he sure that the Forum, which had received much evidence on the impracticality of a United Ireland, would necessarily help the SDLP's objectives. He had it in mind shortly to discuss all this with Mr Hume.

More generally, Mr Molyneaux said that he was not unduly concerned about the rise of Sinn Fein. While their electoral support might increase, as long as they remained ^{an} abstentionist party, they had no outlet for their constituents. Nor was electoral support required for terrorism. And there were some encouraging signs. The mi: ty community in Polglass and Twinbrook consulted

him and not Sinn Fein about constituency matters since they knew he was in a position to deal with them. He believed that if the SDLP could not deal with such matters, then unionists had to. Nationalist students had also been interested to hear his arguments in support of the union. He did not suggest that Roman Catholics joined the Unionist Party, but there were signs that numbers of them were taking up a more neutral position.

Concluding the meeting, the Secretary of State said that he wished first to record formally his sympathies to Mr Molyneux as leader of the Unionist party for the murder of Mr Armstrong. He believed government representation at the funeral would be appropriate, and had invited Mr Patten to attend. He had been interested to hear Mr Molyneux's assessment of the political situation at the present time. He was himself concerned about the rise of Sinn Fein, the need to find a way of involving nationalists in Northern Ireland, and the position of the SDLP. He suggested, and Mr Molyneux agreed, that they have a further informal discussion on political developments in London the following week.

Detail

Mr J M LYON
Private Secretary
16 November 1983

cc PS/SofS (L&B) - M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
PS/Sir Ewart Bell - M
Mr Brennan
Mr Bourn - M
Mr Merifield - M
Mr Doyne-Ditmas - M
Mr Angel
Mr Palmer - M
Mr Buxton - M
Mr Abbott
Mr Boys Smith
Mr Bickham