

E.R.

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PAB/67/BN

Tell
PA on SF file
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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
PS/Sir Ewart Bell
Mr Bourn
Mr Brennan - M
Mr Merifield
Mr Gilliland
✓ Mr Carvill
Mr Reeve
Mr Abbott - M
Mr Lyon - M
Mr Edis
Mr Coulson
Mr Jackson
Mr Bickham - M

MEETING WITH BISHOP DALY - 6 SEPTEMBER 1984

I called with Bishop Daly and during a lengthy discussion the following points arose.

2. Magilligan Prison

There are two Roman Catholic Chaplains to the prison and the Bishop believes, from their information, that Provisional IRA has decided to allow Loyalists to make the running on the segregation issue.

The unrest in the prison is causing him concern and he believes that if the situation can be defused by some internal compromise (not specified) it would deprive the paramilitaries of a very useful cause.

In asking me to pass on these remarks he stressed that he realised that, without the full background, his approach may be dismissed as simplistic but he felt that he should make his concern known.

3. S.O.S.P

Bishop Daly repeated his long standing grievance in relation to SOSPs and in particular asked me to draw the cases of Mr Page and Mr O'Hagan to the attention of the responsible authority. He did not elaborate on these individual cases except to say that he believed them to be innocent and that they were already well known following earlier representations which he has made.

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4. Provisional Sinn Fein/SDLP

Bishop Daly started by asking me if I was aware in any increase in pressures within the SDLP caused by the Seamus Mallon faction. I told him that I could only judge from recent media reports which certainly indicated that Mr Mallon was becoming more outspoken.

The Bishop asked me because he said he formed a definite opinion during a recent meeting, arranged by SDLP, with the 'Kilbrandon Committee' that there was tension in the SDLP group occasioned by Mr Mallon's view that there can be no movement within the Northern Ireland context. (This view is borne out by reports I have had from Mr John McEvoy, Chairman of the Newry and Mourne Council of a similar meeting in his area when he opposed Mallon's view and thought, to use his words, 'he was going to get a glass in the face').

During a discussion about the forthcoming local Government elections the Bishop said that he was very concerned about reports he had had both from the media and through what he described as 'my counterparts from the South' that a change of policy within Provisional Sinn Fein may lead to more selective targetting as far as the elections are concerned and that the bombing and shooting campaign will be stepped up. His information from my 'counterparts in the South' is that Provisional Sinn Fein is short of funds following the European Elections and also that their showing in that election had raised the spectre of a further reduction of their overall vote amongst the minority community in the local Government elections which would of course put paid to their publicly stated position that their support in the minority community is rising.

He has also noted from his curates in Londonderry that there is a definite drop-off in Provisional Sinn Fein community work and that some of the advice centres are not open as often as they have been in the past.

This discussion ended with the Bishop emphasising that unless constitutional politics can be seen to be successful then whatever Provisional Sinn Fein decide in the short term they will gain support in the long term.

Success for constitutional politics was defined by the Bishop as a major concession to the SDLP based on the Forum Report. He feels that even if such a concesssion was made within the Northern Ireland framework it would be sufficient to secure the SDLP vote and to heal the Mallon/Hume rift.

5. General

Bishop Daly echoed Cardinal O'Fiaich in his praise of the Northern Ireland Office's response to their representation in respect of Bernadette Boyle and 'closed visits' issues. He asked me to emphasise the importance of such actions in areas such as West Belfast and West Derry where the family connection was still very strong. The family connection of Bernadette Boyle is very large indeed and that he himself had estimated that there were hundreds of people involved.

He went on to say that the media and politicians constantly referred to various incidents and events as causes for recruitment to the Provisional IRA and other paramilitaries but he felt that it was important to note that the above cases together with any other examples of compassion and common sense will have an equal but opposite effect.

Finally the Bishop told me that he had found the meeting useful and as he has said at previous meetings he hoped the contact would continue.



J E McCONNELL

Political Affairs Division

7 September 1984