

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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**Title:** 'Secret' memorandum to Liam Cosgrave, TD, Taoiseach from Muiris MacConghail, Head of Government Information Services, reporting on his meeting with Dr Edward Daly, Bishop of Derry, at which the latter informed him of the substance of his meetings with representatives of the Provisional IRA [Irish Republican Army], as well as with British officials, including Merlyn Rees, MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

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Taoiseach

I had a discussion with Dr. Daly, the Bishop of Derry last evening. He informed me that both himself and the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise had been approached by "sources" in Dublin on Sunday week with a view to having an urgent meeting. The purpose of the meeting, they were informed, was to take some action in relation to the British non-reaction to the ceasefire.

The two Bishops met O Conaill, O'Hagan, Twomey and Mallon in Dublin (the IRA leaders arrived by taxi). The meeting lasted 3 hours. The IRA leaders told the Bishops that they had called on them because they trusted them. The Bishop said he thought the IRA knew that public support was not what it was - but that they were far from beaten. The IRA told the Bishops that they were very concerned because they believed that the British Government did not believe that the IRA were sincere in their ceasefire proposals and that they had got no adequate response. They were furious at the British Government for continued "harassment" particularly in the deployment of troops and their failure to release an adequate number of internees. The Bishop told me that O Conaill did most of the talking and that he was very "doveish" - "this thing has gone on for 4 years, something else must be given a try. We want to speak to someone" (referring to Government). Twomey frightened him in his attitude - when the Bishop asked him about Catholics in Sth. Belfast-Twomey said what the hell are they doing living there, they'll have to move where we can defend them. The Bishop believes that Twomey is the Chief of Staff - while O Conaill "speaks for them all". The Bishop of Derry informed me that he took "certain steps" to ensure that the British Prime Minister was informed of this concern by the IRA and he believes it was due more to this than to the response which Rees made to the Church leaders (the Cardinal was disappointed at Rees' reaction, according to the Bishop of Derry) that Wilson arranged for the Downing Street talks. In relation to this meeting the Bishop said "we made a response to London"

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(and that the response of Rees was inadequate)

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The talks were, according to the Bishop, arranged purely to indicate that the ceasefire was being taken seriously but Rees himself had never intended that the Churchmen see Wilson.

Last Monday the Bishop got a phone call from James Allan to arrange a meeting between the Bishop and Rees. The meeting was held in Belfast in a private house and consisted of Rees, Frank Cooper and James Allan. Rees launched a "fantastic" attack on all Ulster politicians and in particular on the SDLP. The only politician of any stature was Brian Faulkner. Cooper spoke very little and Allen took notes. Rees also informed the Bishop of Derry that he was anxious to have direct talks with the Provisionals but that the relationship between the Dublin Government and London inhibited him in this regard - two friendly Governments, membership of the EEC etc. According to the Bishop, Rees said "he was afraid of Dublin reaction". Rees said he also noted from press reports the position of the Dublin Government - "how to talk to O Conaill when Dublin want him". Rees believes now that the IRA are sincere, according to the Bishop and that it appears to the Bishop that Conor O'Cleary's three phases in the Irish Times is an accurate account of the situation.

The Bishop told me that he believed that the British Government were anxious to have direct talks with the Provisionals through appropriate channels, if that could be arranged.

In relation to the forthcoming Convention Elections Rees told the Bishop that in the worst possible circumstances the Loyalists could do no more than gain 45 seats. Rees told the Bishop he would like to release more, but the problem is that on the Protestant side only sectarian murderers are left, and Internees must be released on both sides.

The Bishop also told me of his idea for a "Commission" of three men - Sean MacBride, Desmond Boal and the Chairman to be named by the British Government. (So far as I could understand the Bishop raised this question with the IRA and subsequently with Rees.)

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The Bishop was returning to Maynooth where a meeting between the Irish and English Bishops (including Dwyer of Birmingham) was to take place. I gather the Northern situation was to be the subject of the discussion.

*hms.*

Muiris Mac Conghail

10 January, 1975