

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2014/32/1928
Creation Date(s):	17 August 1984
Extent and medium:	4 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Access Conditions:	Open
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Confidential

Meeting with Bishop Cathal Daly 15 August, 1984

Among the points made by Bishop Daly were the following:

- The credibility of Sir John Harmon is destroyed for ever as a result of the activities in the past few days of the RUC.
- The RUC as presently structured is unacceptable in any new circumstances. There would have to be a new police force. He would have a preference for a new unarmed force if that were possible.
- He would favour some form of community police particularly in West Belfast. Within the last six months people in the communities themselves had met to discuss ways and means of dealing with endemic vandalism in West Belfast. From these meetings the idea for a local community police force was emerging. The people concerned even in strong Provisional territory like Beechmount, had kept both the Provisional I.R.A. and Provisional Sinn Fein out of these committees. That of course has all been put back by recent events in Belfast.
- He would strongly stress that the police be accountable. One of the reasons why the RUC is so sectarian and so undisciplined is that it is not accountable to local politicians. The same is true of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and of Northern Ireland ministers who are not accountable in any real way to their own constituents for what they are doing in Northern Ireland. He surprised me by saying that

he would have a strong preference that the police force be accountable to a local assembly (of an acceptable nature) and that he would also prefer if any army back-up could be responsible to it as well.

- Though the present assembly is irredeemable and DUP controlled and could not in his view form part of any new arrangement, there is a need for a strong local assembly with some form of power sharing.
- He would favour an assembly and executive similar in broad terms to that which existed in 1974.
- The fundamental element must be that the nationalists are seen to have political power and that nationalist politicians are seen to influence political decisions. There must be an Anglo-Irish involvement in everything.
- He favoured the release of a steady trickle of prisoners starting with those who have indeterminate sentences (SOSPs), those who have already served very lengthy sentences and those who have clearly cut their links with the paramilitaries. He would favour the release of as many as possible subject to security considerations.
- Other nationalist symbols and cultural aspects are minor in comparison with security and the prison issue. He is satisfied with the educational system.
- There are some difficulties at local level particularly where the Councils such as Lisburn and Larne are DUP controlled. The tendency there is to deny nationalist people as much assistance as possible. Local councils should not be given back up in any new arrangements nor does he think the Regional Council has any value.
- He concluded by saying that the nationalist people look to Dublin as the unionists look to London. They

are as entitled to do that as are the unionists. They should also be entitled to have Dublin represent their nationalist interests. Within a new assembly operating on a power sharing basis nationalist politicians should have responsibility for those issues of specific concern to nationalists. They should have their share of those ministries which are of concern to both communities and should at all times have the power to influence all decisions which are taken.

- The Bishop asked if there was any way in which we could talk to Gerry Adams. He seemed reasonably convinced from various signs that Adams is trying to turn the "armed struggle" into a non-violent one. He could not himself speak with Adams about politics but the Church could speak to Adams about the pastoral concerns of the Church. As far as he can gather the case that Adams is putting to the gunmen is that if another way could be found to meet nationalist concerns then violence would be unnecessary. It is not his place to tell Adams other ways which might be available but pastoral concerns are his. He said he would not talk to Adams directly and he would not in any way wish to give Adams a chance to make propaganda. He is clearly considering if it would be possible to talk to Adams indirectly through a priest. He said he has a number of priests who know Adams in a pastoral way. He mentioned Fr. Des Wilson whom he said has gone off the rails completely. He would not think that any of these priests would carry much weight with Adams and is looking for some priest who might do.
- I said neither members of the Government nor Government officials would meet Sinn Fein as long as that organisation was dedicated to supporting political change through violence.
- In any new arrangement the Bishop would lay very great stress on economic improvement to take the unemployed

off the streets. He said the visit of President Reagan had disappointed him in that Reagan had not given a clear commitment to assist economically should circumstances change. Money will have to be poured into places like Belfast if any solution is to be found.

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17 August, 1984

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