

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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US Bishops' Visit to Ireland

Additional Note on Progress of Visit

1. The U.S. Bishops arrived in Ireland on Sunday 21 October. They travelled to Armagh and one of their number (Bishop Hurley) visited Armagh Women's Prison and discussed among other things strip searching. Others were briefed at length on the situation in the Prisons. They met the Northern Ireland Bishops that night.
2. They spent Monday 22 October in Belfast. Following early morning meetings with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Fair Employment Agency they separately said Mass in different churches in West Belfast and met various community leaders and workers. In the afternoon they visited a number of community projects such as the Flax Trust. Their lunch was hosted by the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board (IDB).
3. Between 3.30 and 5.00 they met the NIO and the Secretary of State. The latter meeting was at Mr. Hurd's request. We have been informed in strict confidence that Bishop Malone (who leads the group) and Bishop Stafford are both very well briefed on the Forum Report and that they told the NIO that the ball is in Britain's court and that the British owe a detailed response to the Forum Report. Bishop O'Connor is reported to know little of the situation.
4. Later in the day they met separately with Mr. Frank Millar, General Secretary of the Official Unionist Party, with the Alliance Party leader, Mr. John Cushnahan, and with John Hume and Seamus Mallon of the SDLP. The DUP said they were refusing to meet the bishops because they had failed to say that they would not talk to "representatives of the gunmen". Sinn Fein, according to the Bishops, were sent an invitation. In the event Sinn Fein did not respond and are reported as having said they received no invitation.

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On the evening of 22 October they had dinner with senior members of the Church of Ireland Presbyterian and Methodist Churches.

5. Their programme for 23 October included a lengthy visit to Derry where they met a very wide range of people, and in the evening in Armagh a meeting with some of those who made submissions to the Forum including Senator John Robb and the Rev. George Dallas. Later they had a private dinner with a representative group of senior journalists

6. During the course of the day Sinn Fein had complained publicly that they had not received an invitation to meet the Bishops and had demonstrated outside their functions. This had had a very irritating effect on the Bishops, who had in fact sent an invitation to Sinn Fein, and on the local populace in Derry. Bishop Malone who is "furious" later issued a statement denying they had refused to meet Sinn Fein and saying their schedule would not now allow a meeting. He added they would accept a written submission. Bishop Edward Daly of Derry who telephoned me yesterday evening feels that Sinn Fein must have made a decision not to meet the Bishops on the grounds that they would get more mileage out of denying they had received an invitation than they would have if they declined or accepted the invitation offered to them. Bishop Daly added that Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein was present at one of the functions attended by the Bishops when a centre for Unemployed Workers was opened. He made no attempt to introduce himself to any of the Bishops and contented himself with complaints to those around him that they had not issued an invitation to Sinn Fein. He mentioned later to Bishop Daly that there was concern in America at what is happening and that James Delaney of the Unity Conference had telephoned Adams at 3.00 in the morning to find out what was going on. Bishop Daly said that this showed up Delaney in his true colours and he hinted that he intended to inform the Cardinal (who recently hosted a lunch for Delaney). He asked that this be treated in strict confidence.

Their programme for today is as follows.

- 10.45 Meeting with Fianna Fail. (The Workers Party have not responded to their invitation).
- 1.00 Lunch hosted by Ceann Comhairle. Guests include Ministers for Defence and Finance as well as the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.
- 2.45-
- 4.15 Meeting with the Taoiseach and Government Ministers.
- 4.30 Call on the President.
- 5.00 Function in the U.S. Embassy.
- 6.00 Meeting and Dinner with Irish Bishops in Maynooth.

D.O.
D. O Ceallaigh
Anglo-Irish Division
24 October, 1984