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Meeting with Fr. Denis Faul, 16 September 1985

I met with Fr. Faul at his home in Dungannon on 16 September last. Among the main points he had to make were the following:

- He intends to issue a statement in the near future strongly critical of the current Provisional leadership and strategy. He will say that traditionally republicanism tried to appeal to Catholic, Protestant and dissenter. By contrast the present IRA, supported by Sinn Fein, murder all three.
- He wants to point out the illogicality of the Provisional position. McEvoy was killed, they claimed, because his firm supplied temporary buildings to the RUC. Yet within recent days the Sin Fein spokesman in East Belfast, O'Donnell, was publicly critical of unionist politicians for endangering the jobs of Catholics in Shorts - a firm which is heavily engaged in the production of weaponry for the British security forces. There is no logic in the Provisional position.
- Likewise their claim to favour human rights and to be engaged in a struggle to obtain human rights for the minority when they deny to many the most fundamental of human rights - the right to life.
- The Provisionals claim their interest is justice. Yet in West Belfast they use extortion and rackets to separate people from their money. He gave the example of the furniture grant (of up to about £600) which is given to single parents. Certain shops will provide a receipt for the full amount while the parent gets a

little furniture, some cash and the shopkeeper gets a large cut which is shared with the Provisionals. There are many instances of social welfare rackets where the Provisionals also take a cut.

- The majority of nationalists in Northern Ireland don't really want a united Ireland. They know that they would suffer economically if there were a united Ireland. Even "hard" nationalists such as Clare O'Reilly of the Association for Legal Justice would privately admit to this.

- The Provisionals are stepping up their campaign against him. A recent example is the editorial in last week's Andersonstown News (attached). He feels sure that his words, like those of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, are damaging the Provisionals. He wonders sometimes if they will attempt to assassinate him though he thinks it would destroy them completely were they to do so.

- The UDR in the Dungannon area, unlike those in some other areas, behave themselves. This is because Jim Canning has established a good working relationship with successive officers commanding in the locality. Fr. Faul described this as a model for the form of consultation the Government should seek in its relations with the British Government. This type of consultation provides power without responsibility. An executive role would give responsibility for all actions, which in his view would be undesirable.

- The life sentence imposed on British Army Private Thain by Judge Higgins last December for the murder of Reilly has had a very good effect on the behaviour of the security forces. This was the first time a soldier was found guilty of murder while he was on duty. It

provided a salutary lesson for other members of the security forces, who now fear the consequences of shooting people. People who previously feared they would be shot are now more relaxed. The outcome has been positive.

- He believes the Provisionals will try to prevent a positive outcome to the Anglo-Irish talks. Their present campaign should be seen in this light. They may attempt to start a hunger strike in Armagh on the strip searching issue. They are forming anti strip-searching committees in each parish, run by prominent Sinn Fein members. This is reminiscent of the hunger strike campaign. Fr. Murray, the Armagh chaplain, has told him he does not believe a hunger strike will start in Armagh. It is also true that so far the Provos have not succeeded in drumming up much non-Provo support for the campaign. But a hunger strike cannot be ruled out over the next while, the purpose being to distract attention from arrangements being made by the two Governments.

- The situation in the prisons is improving. Though he is not aware of much of the detail the easing of the position on compassionate parole and the increase in the number of lifers being provided with release dates was known to him. This trend is helpful and he hoped it would continue.

- He believes that the Provisionals are now on the run. It is time for the Catholic bishops to help priests like himself and to condemn the Provisionals in a forthright manner. He is very appreciative of the efforts of the Minister for Foreign Affairs in providing an alternative to the Provisionals.

- He regrets recent publicity in the Irish Times which reported him as saying he is kept generally informed of the progress of the talks. (This is not the case). What he had told the journalist was what he would wish to see emerging from the talks - a phasing out of the UDR part-timers and the RUC reserve. He wants British officers in charge of the UDR at all times and better disciplinary procedures. He also wants something on the courts.

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19 September 1985

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