



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2016/52/09
Creation Dates:	11 February 1986
Extent and medium:	5 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

SECRET

SL5517

14 FEB 86
15517
21239
24404
20576

Meeting with Bishop Cathal Daly, 11 February 1986

I met Bishop Cathal Daly of Down and Connor in Belfast on 11 February.

Among the points which he made to me were the following:

- The mood of middle-class nationalists is still one of very strong support for the Agreement. They regard it as the key to progress on security issues, in particular the acceptability of the security forces. It will also contribute decisively, in their view, to the ending of discrimination in employment, to the achievement of economic stability and, in general, to "making Northern Ireland an easier place to live in".

- In the working-class Catholic ghettos of West Belfast, however, where people are "anti-Establishment, anti-authority and anti-everything", the mood is one of deep scepticism. Bishop Daly blames the SDLP for having made no serious effort in the past to penetrate West Belfast and to challenge Sinn Fein's monopoly there. In particular, he is disappointed that the party has not tried to exploit its success over Sinn Fein in the Newry-Armagh by-election. Mallon's victory gave the SDLP a "tremendous shot in the arm", yet it has failed so far to seize this golden opportunity to put Sinn Fein under pressure in West Belfast. It would be a terrible shame if the SDLP did not try to capitalise on the popularity which it is currently enjoying, thanks to the Agreement, by launching an all-out bid for the West Belfast seat at the next Westminster election. To do so, however, it will probably need to find a replacement for Joe Hendron, as the latter has some image problems in West Belfast and is unlikely to commit himself to the hard work without which the seat cannot be won. The Bishop suggested that Alex Attwood, who made a good impression at the recent BIA Conference, would be a good

candidate. If the SDLP were to select a candidate now who could begin preparations and make himself known on the ground in West Belfast, they might have some chance of victory. As it is, however, Gerry Adams remains the "working-class hero" and the SDLP count for nothing there.

- There are deep fears that Loyalist paramilitaries may avail of the present post-election vacuum to carry out sectarian assassinations of Catholics living in North Belfast and in isolated areas of East Belfast such as the Short Strand. Protestant clergymen with whom the Bishop is in touch have confided to him their fear that this is now on the cards. In addition, he has been told of a rumour going around in the mixed blocks of the Maze (which include UDA and UVF prisoners) that "things will get pretty hot" towards the end of February or the beginning of March. A number of Catholics have been murdered since the Agreement was signed, including, most recently, Martin Quinn in the Bawnmore estate in North Belfast. (The Bishop believes that the latter was a sectarian assassination). In addition, five Catholic schools have been the target of arson attacks in Ballymena and a number of churches in North Belfast have been vandalised. Tension is rising and this, of course, works to the advantage of the Provisional IRA. The Bishop understands that Christopher Black, the "supergrass" behind the current appeal case, was responsible for putting virtually the entire Provo leadership in North Belfast behind bars. For the past year or so, therefore, things have been relatively quiet there - to the extent that the RUC were able to patrol the Bawnmore estate regularly and won a certain amount of trust from local residents. Now, however, the Provos are "beginning to drift back". Frightened at the signs of growing Loyalist militancy, Catholics "in the ghettos" turn all too easily to the Provos for their protection.

- Bishop Daly blames the "totally irresponsible" attitude of Unionist politicians for much of this militancy. There are moderate voices in the Unionist camp but they "cannot be heard above the din" (a metaphor which he applied also to the SDLP in West Belfast).

- The Bishop was encouraged to see that Bertie Dickinson has been replaced as Presbyterian Moderator by "a much more reasonable" individual, John Thompson, who could be expected to "reach out" to the 24 dissident Presbyterian Ministers. Many decent Protestants, furthermore, were appalled by the antics of DUP supporters who disrupted a recent ecumenical service in St. Anne's Cathedral which involved Cardinal Suenens. Some of this disgust surfaced in a statement issued subsequently by Dorothy Dunlop. There is considerable anger that Paisley has managed to take control of the Unionist community and has made Molyneaux "look like a small boy". The Bishop believes that there may be some reaction against this in due course.

- He is not enthusiastic about the appointment of Robin Eames to the Church of Ireland's See of Armagh. From his time as Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Eames does not have a good record as an ecumenist and in private conversation his Unionist views emerge quite clearly. The Bishop hopes that Eames' responsibility for the Church on both sides of the border will cause him to offer more balanced views in future than his form to date would suggest. He is not certain, however, that Eames will emulate the ecumenical standards set by Armstrong in Armagh.

- While he would not go along with the SDLP's rhetoric to the effect that the Unionists must be 'faced down', forced to swallow their medicine etc., Bishop Daly regards it nevertheless as essential that the Unionist politicians be told firmly that they must acknowledge a basic political reality in Northern Ireland: 40% of the population are nationalist. He was struck by Mrs. Hazel Bradford's remark on TV the other night to the effect that there will never be any reconciliation in Northern Ireland between the nationalist 'aspiration' and Unionist 'rights'. Unionists will talk freely of their own rights but will not accept that nationalists have rights. It must be impressed on them that their belligerence will get them nowhere and that they must accept realities. The Bishop believes that Paisley, though fanatical in many respects, is

fundamentally a political opportunist and could be brought to accept that the Unionists' present tactics will mean the loss of their remaining public support in the UK. He added that any sign of weakness on the part of the British Government in implementing the Agreement would be disastrous. It would benefit only the extremists on either side, who could claim that their militancy had paid off.

- We covered a variety of security and legal issues. Referring to the recent McLoughlin case, the Bishop said that if the allegations made about police behaviour in this case were true, it would obviously be impossible for Catholics to lend their support to the RUC. He hoped to see early progress on (a) the Code of Conduct and (b) the Stalker Report. He mentioned also that the RUC's reputation in West Belfast has sunk to a new low recently. Evidence has emerged which suggests that a number of known criminals who have been walking around openly and with their "noses in the air" are doing so because they are paid informers and know that the RUC will not lift them. An example was a young Divis resident called Taggart, who was murdered recently by the Provos - not, as the latter would like to suggest, because he was a criminal but because he was a tout. This practice must stop if people are to have confidence in the RUC.

- In relation to the UDR, there has been evidence recently of UDR patrols entering Bawnmore and other Catholic estates in North Belfast. Indeed, there is a rumour that a UDR truck was spotted in Bawnmore on the night Martin Quinn was murdered. Given that the RUC has had some success in keeping things quiet in the area over the past year, it is both unnecessary and provocative to introduce the UDR there as well. There is no case for deploying the UDR either in nationalist areas or on the periphery of nationalist areas. At a lunch with King and Scott last week, the Bishop tried to impress this point on the Secretary of State but feels that it did not get across. King, who strikes him as a "totally unimpressive politician", failed entirely to appreciate the dangers.

- Scott, on the other hand, is a sensible and compassionate individual who has ensured a certain amount of progress in relation to life sentence review. There is, of course, room for much more progress and the Bishop cannot understand why a number of prisoners with what seem to be very compelling cases have not been released. On the other hand, he considered that, while Fr. Denis Faul is doing admirable work, he is "perhaps a little romantic" in imagining that the British would virtually clear out the prisons overnight. He could understand that the British might not want to make too rapid progress in this area in view of the "terrible risk" that someone might revert to paramilitary activities after being released.

- Finally, the Bishop mentioned that Mawhinney, who visited him last week to discuss education matters, made "a number of positive noises" and struck him as less stridently Unionist than a number of reports would suggest.

David Donoghue
David Donoghue

13 February 1986

cc:- Taoiseach
Minister
Secretary
Mr. Nally
Mr. Lillis
A-I Section
Ambassadors London and Washington
Box