



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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NOTE

1. I called on Bishop Cathal Daly at his residence on 9th July. I informed him of my proposed appointment and said that apart from wishing to pay a courtesy call on him, I would also greatly appreciate his views on the current situation in the North.
2. The Bishop said that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was a most valuable development because it ~~was~~ clearly recognised that Northern Ireland was not simply British and gave administrative effect to this reality. Neither the pretence of the Unionists, that Northern Ireland was purely British, nor the mythology of the Provos, which utterly ignored Unionist attitudes, came to terms with the reality of the situation. A recognition of Nationalist aspirations was now enshrined in the machinery of administration. The Agreement had also been beneficial in its effects on the Unionist community, and had showed that British leverage could be brought to bear on the Unionist monolith, which was now showing cracks. Unionist canvassers during the election had got the message that their purely negative stance was not popular and the recent Task Force Report was a recognition of this.
3. He expressed disappointment but not surprise at the election results in West Belfast. The SDLP had been over confident and the campaign insufficiently prepared. The Provos were able to exploit the charge that the SDLP was a middle-class party, and were cleverly suggesting that they themselves were the champions of the working class. Long-term work and a candidate of suitable background would be necessary to overcome this. There had been some electoral abuse - personation and intimidation at the booths through 'heavies' acting as tallymen. However Gerry Adams was seen and

promoted as a 'local boy'. The Marley funeral issue had also helped the Provo vote.

4. I asked Bishop Daly whether he felt the funeral issue had now been disposed of. He said that the Provos had tried to annex him to their propaganda but he had avoided their trap. The police handling of the Loughgall funerals had been very sensitive and avoided a potentially explosive situation. In the course of other pastoral work he had witnessed an earlier funeral (MacKernan?) and found a massive police presence which was certainly counterproductive in terms of local attitudes. He hoped the police were now more sensitive and that the Provos would not persist in challenging the Church on the issue.

5. On the question of policing Bishop Daly said that the response of the police on routine issues in certain areas of the city was so poor that in desperation the local people were turning to the Provos to provide some sort of order. He appreciated the problems facing the police and the obvious dangers of booby traps and decoy calls, but felt that where requests for assistance came through a priest they should get a rapid response. On Catholic recruitment to the RUC the Bishop said that there was a practical problem in that Catholics in the force had to be deployed outside their own areas - for example a recruit from West Belfast was in effect confined to the Bangor or South Belfast area. Unionist politicians and Protestant Churchmen had appealed to him to urge Catholics to join the force but those who made these appeals greatly overestimated the influence of the Church in such matters. He considered Chief Constable Hermon an honest and sincere man who had done much to change the RUC from being merely the police arm of the ^{unionist} community. Hermon had felt that promoting Catholics to senior positions in the force was the way to greater acceptability of the force but Bishop Daly had tried to persuade him that what people wanted was honest impartial policing and this, and not the personal faith of senior

officers, was the key. The Bishop enquired of me what the position was on the proposed Code of Conduct and emphasised its importance in his eyes.

5. Regarding political options in the North the Bishop felt that the devolution issue should now be explored. Direct rule had its drawbacks which Unionists, in particular, resented and this might make them more amenable to change. He emphasised, however, his view that devolution should be limited and should not extend to the security issue. This should remain under British control.

6. At the close of our interview Bishop Daly referred to the MacBride Principles. He felt the Government should be careful not to fall into the trap of opposing the Principles. The issue should be side-stepped through an emphasis on actual job creation. He discussed briefly what an application of the Principles might involve - for example in terms of maintaining a Protestant/Catholic ratio if, say, a new factory were sited in West Belfast. He spoke approvingly of the recent actions of the Shorts management in opposing the display of loyalist emblems and said that the loyalist extremists in the plant had been isolated on the issue. He returned again to the importance of job creation as an ingredient of progress.

7. We had some brief discussion of the current marching season, where the Bishop was optimistic about major trouble being avoided, and on some practical aspects of the functioning of the Maryfield Secretariat. Our meeting then concluded.

Sean O Huiginn

Sean O Huiginn,
9 July, 1987.

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