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Meeting with Fr. Raymond Murray,
23 April 1987

I met Fr. Raymond Murray in Armagh yesterday.

Among the points which arose were the following:

Provisional IRA

The recent upsurge in Provo violence is explicable as a reaction by the more militant members of the Army Council to the poor performance of the political wing of the movement, not just in the Dáil elections but generally over the past few years. The militants are taking advantage of the "credit" temporarily afforded to them by the RUC's behaviour over the Marley funeral. Even if there had been no Marley controversy, however, it is likely that the militants would have "hotted things up" in order to demonstrate that, irrespective of its political fortunes, the IRA is always capable of military successes. There has been a feeling for some time now, which came to a head following Sinn Féin's poor performance in the Dáil elections, that the IRA's political involvement has got it nowhere. Sinn Féin Councillors go around asking people about trivial matters such as leaking roofs. They come across as only slightly more extreme than the SDLP and, to many hardened Provos, appear to have "virtually joined the Establishment". At the same time the level of Provo violence in Belfast has fallen off noticeably in recent years - under the command of Paddy Adams, Gerry's brother (installed by the latter as O.C. of the Belfast Brigade). Resentment over this has been building up within Provo ranks for the past couple of years. The spectacle of Gerry Adams taking an opposing view (over the abstentionism issue at last year's Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis) to Daithí O Conaill, long revered by Northern Provos, was particularly traumatic.

It is probable that the militants are intent on taking their revenge and that Adams and his colleagues have been forced to go along with this in the interests of preserving unity between both wings of the movement. Such unity is more important to Adams (who needs the Provo "muscle" behind his political campaign) than it is to the militants. There is, in fact, a risk that the latter could break away and join with other dissidents (e.g., Republican Sinn Féin) to form a new Army Council.

The duration of the present upsurge in Provo violence will indicate the degree of control still exercised by Adams over the movement. If it is "switched off" within the next couple of weeks (i.e. about a month before the rumoured election date - "long enough for people to forget"), this will show that priority is still being attached to Adams' re-election campaign in West Belfast. If, on the other hand, the violence continues unabated, it will be clear that the militants have the upper hand and that Adams and the interests of his campaign have lost out to them.

As regards the particular form of the recent violence (the killing of RUC men in Portrush and Newcastle), the Provos will probably explain to any hesitant supporters that they were forced to select such "soft" targets because attacks on the police in built-up urban areas have been made more difficult by increased undercover surveillance work in those areas. Nevertheless, the attacks were particularly nasty and, taken together with the killing of the Magherafelt building contractor "which nobody on any side would have welcomed", it seems that the interests of Adams' campaign are being put very much in second place, at least for the time being.

Marley funeral

The steadily rising profile of the police and Army at the funerals of nationalist paramilitaries in recent months made a crisis such as that which occurred over the Marley funeral

inevitable. Nicholas Scott had insisted (after the Roselawn Cemetery bomb attack) that "even in war there has been a code which allows the dead to be buried in peace and with dignity" - yet the RUC would not accord the same privilege to the Marley family. It was all too obvious that the Provos would exploit to the full the resentment felt over this. Fr. Murray told me that the RUC's handling of the Marley funeral was condemned even by a number of Armagh Protestants whom he knows.

Ill-treatment in custody

Fr. Murray is not aware of any recent cases of ill-treatment in custody anywhere in Northern Ireland.

Regarding the dossier which Fr. Joe McVeigh is reportedly assembling on this subject, he made a number of points. First, if there had been any serious cases of ill-treatment in custody, Sinn Féin would have publicised them long before now. Secondly, Fr. McVeigh, whom Fr. Murray knows well, is "much too close to Sinn Féin for his own good" and cannot be regarded as a reliable or objective source in such matters. He advised the Government to exercise considerable caution in regard to allegations made by Fr. McVeigh.

RUC pressure on individuals to act as informers

Fr. Murray is, on the other hand, aware of a number of recent cases in which the RUC evidently put pressure on individuals to act as informers. He gave me details of them. In one instance, he asked the Cardinal to raise the matter with the Secretary of State. The Cardinal did so in writing a couple of days ago. (We are giving consideration to this and the other cases with a view to raising them in the Conference framework).

Anglo-Irish Conference

Finally, Fr. Murray was pleased with the way the meeting of the Conference in Belfast on the previous day had gone. It seemed to have done good work and he was pleased with the rapport which had obviously been established between both sides.

David Donoghue

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24 April, 1987.

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