



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2018/28/2799
Creation Dates:	25 January 1988
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

CONFIDENTIAL

Conversation with Cardinal O Fiaich

I met Cardinal O Fiaich in Armagh on 25 January (previous report 21 December 1987). The following were points of interest.

News came through while we were in conversation that the British Attorney General had announced the Northern DPP's decision not to prosecute for the cover-up of the shoot-to-kill incidents in Armagh in 1982. I briefed the Cardinal on the statement which the Government proposed to make. The Cardinal himself expressed no surprise and did not dwell on the subject except to say that "this will cause problems for you" (the Government in Dublin) and to speculate that an injunction might now be sought against Stalker's forthcoming book on security grounds. The Cardinal has previously expressed the greatest scepticism that the British Government would act to clear up the case. He mentioned that Bishop Daly would attend the Birmingham Appeal judgement on 28 January. He was pessimistic about the likely result.

The Cardinal asked for the Government's view of the Hume/Adams meeting. I said the Government respected Hume's judgement that it would be worthwhile to talk to Adams, although this was not to suggest that a major development was immediately at hand. The Cardinal agreed, he did not think that "peace was around the corner". He commented that no Catholic in the North had been critical to him of the meeting, and only two in the South. Furthermore, at a meeting of Church leaders last week, no criticism had been expressed to him. Archbishop Eames had probed for information but had made no comment. Neither had the Methodist President, Mr. Hamilton. The Presbyterian General Secretary, Mr. Simpson had given a surprisingly good reaction. He said ordinary Presbyterians had been saying to him: "You Church leaders are always calling on the politicians to talk, that must mean talk to everyone, and you can hardly complain when a politician takes you up on it."

The Cardinal said he had recorded at this meeting his concern about the remarks made about him after Enniskillen by the Presbyterian Moderator, Mr. Fleming, who was not present.

I mentioned that an officer of the Department would be calling on Fr. Raymond Murray shortly and would follow up on his remarks about three recent UDR incidents in Armagh. I noted that Fr. Murray had said on RTE that the UDR had been quiet in Armagh in recent times and I said we were anxious to keep it that way. The Cardinal said he had been aware of the incident at Keady where Fr. Murray and a fellow priest had been kept for some time by the UDR, but had not been aware of the incident where a youth had been abused by the UDR in St. Patrick's Cemetery.

We had some discussion about prisons. The Cardinal is conscious that things have been fairly quiet recently and he remarked that the atmosphere in Maghaberry, which he visited last Spring, was a great improvement on the atmosphere in Armagh where he felt the former Catholic prison governor, Murtagh, had had a lot to answer for. He had intended to visit Maghaberry again in November but this was put off following Enniskillen. He expects to make a visit with Fr. Murray shortly. He noted that the number of politicals in Maghaberry was now down to 20 or less. We had some discussion about the current position on life sentence review (the Cardinal was aware of it in relation to Shane Paul O'Doherty). I briefed him on the efforts we had made in this matter and also on Christmas parole where I noted we had had some success.

The Cardinal asked if we had been surprised by his remarks following the death of John McMichael. I said I had taken it that he had hoped by his statement to help avoid retaliation. The Cardinal said that had been very much in his mind, but he had also been influenced by the fact that John McMichael had come to see him with other members of the UDA a few years ago which, given the lack of contact offered to him by unionists in general, he had appreciated.

The Cardinal's relations with Archbishop Eames continue to be virtually non-existent. He mentioned with a little chagrin that Archbishop Eames was "too frequently busy" when the Cardinal sent him invitations to Church events and he had recently turned down an invitation to meet Cardinal Glemp at the palace. The Cardinal noted at this point that Cardinal Glemp and he had had a good conversation of about 40 minutes with the Taoiseach on 21 January.

The Cardinal said there was a scheme to set up a second Irish-speaking primary school in West Belfast and he asked if we could give him information on the minimum number of pupils which are required to establish (a) a language school and (b) an integrated school. He thought that the hurdle was being put at an unnecessarily high level for the new West Belfast project, but he wished to have the information to see if it bore out this impression.

The Cardinal is leaving shortly for Rome and thereafter for the United States on 7 February to raise funds for Maynooth. He will go to Philadelphia, St. Louis, Los Angeles and San Diego in the course of his visit. I said I would let the our people in the United States know of his visit, if they did not know already.



Declan O'Donovan

28 January 1988

cc: Mr. Gallagher,
Counsellors,
Section,
Box.

3393m