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Meeting with P. J. McGrory, Belfast, 29 June 1988

The meeting was largely concerned with the forthcoming preliminary hearing for the Gibraltar inquest which has been recorded separately. He also mentioned recent developments within Sinn Fein.

He still sees the Sinn Fein/IRA as being controlled by a hardcore of old Republican families, many of whom have been involved in the Republican movement for up to three generations. Gerry Adams is very much of that tradition. An essential element among these hardcore Republican families is the tradition of physical force. He felt for them it would always be an option. While there are indications that Gerry Adams certainly wants to move the organisation in a political direction, he is sure that he will not go the way of the officials in the early 70's. In other words, he could not see him vacating the traditional physical force Republican ground.

His own feeling is that Adams is very much in control of the movement. The way in which he disposed of the Old Guard of O Bradaigh etc., demonstrates to McGrory's mind, Adams firm grip on Sinn Fein and the IRA. While there may be elements within the IRA to some degree hostile to Adams, McGrory feels that these are very much in the minority. Adams comes from the IRA, knows the IRA and is respected by them.

The type of debate conducted the previous weekend on what is essentially the conflict between the armalite and ballot box strategies, McGrory sees this as demonstrating the confidence within Sinn Fein. They are now prepared to openly debate issues like this and this, to McGrory's mind, demonstrates the firm grip which he feels that Adams has on the movement.

He sees Adams as very much a pragmatic politician. He thought a particularly revealing aspect of this is the attitude which has

been adopted to the Public Order Order which requires seven days notice for all parades and demonstrations. Initially, Sinn Fein took the usual "principled" position and refused to apply under the terms of the Order. As a result, quite a number of them were fined etc. McGrory pointed out to Adams that if he continues this policy the Government would incarcerate the leadership of the movement for a few months after every marching season which is something which could hardly help Sinn Fein. Adams reversed the policy and McGrory thought it significant that Sinn Fein now comply with the provisions of the Public Order Order throughout the six counties.

McGrory dismissed rumours that the recent disastrous incidents in Fermanagh were deliberately organised by elements in the IRA to derail Adams political strategy. He put the incidents down to "a crowd of nut cases operating in that area" and that while Adams was "hopping mad" about these incidents, they did not appear to McGrory to give substance to rumours of plots against Adams within the IRA.

KC
PP Brendan McMahon,
| July 1988.

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