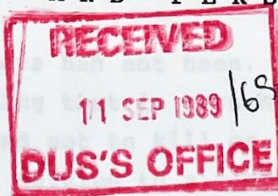


S E C R E T A N D P E R S O N A L

PAB/5464/AG

FROM: J E MCCONNELL
DATE: 8 SEPTEMBER 1989



NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc PS/Secretary of State (L&B) 122
PS/PUS (L&B) 324
Mr Burns - 5
Mr Deverell - 6
Mr Miles - 7
Mr Daniell - 8
File - 9

DISCUSSION WITH FR REID

Following a telephone call from Father Reid I arranged to meet him in my office yesterday morning. The meeting lasted from 11.45 until 1.15. He started the discussion by saying that he was speaking to me on his own behalf - though it was clear to me from various remarks made during the discussion that he is also speaking to Gerry Adams. At no time did he offer any further information on this relationship. The main points of interest which arose are as follows.

2. We had a very brief conversation about prison matters during which he praised the efforts of the Prison Authorities particularly in relation to the "Summer Leave Programme". He went on to tell me about 18 months ago he believed that there might be trouble at Magilligan Prison because of certain points of irritation. These have, by and large, been resolved and there is, to his knowledge, little trouble on the prisons front. He is inclined to believe that "reasonable voices" such as his own are being listened to (I cannot remember what he is talking about on this particular issue though I remember he gave me some papers on demands etc from the prisoners which I passed to Prisons Division at the time).

3. Fr Reid gave me a little more background as to his own particular role in things past and present - he told me that he had been involved in acting as a messenger between Bobby Sands, Brendan Hughes and Cardinal O Fiaich and that some of his endeavours

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had been successful and others had not been. He quoted one of his successful endeavours as being that in return for some concession (undisclosed) PIRA had agreed not to kill or injure prison officers. Currently he is talking to a cleric (unnamed) from the Shankill Road in an effort to stop the current UVF killings with part of his argument being the IRA may well retaliate, not by killing "innocent Protestants", but by "taking out" the UVF leadership. He took the opportunity again at this point to stress that he was merely responding to what he saw to be pressures within the community.

4. He then rehearsed the John Hume discussions with Gerry Adams saying that John Hume had told Adams that they were fighting a war that had already been won and, at this point, Fr Reid went back over the neutrality point etc - he did not ask me to comment at any point in these discussions. He then went on to tell me as he had told me before, that Sinn Fein (he is always at pains to stress the division between Sinn Fein and PIRA though he also talks about cross membership) would expect to speak directly to HMG to hear for themselves the sort of thing that John Hume is saying. I repeated HMG's position on this point saying that neither this British Government nor any other British Government was likely to consider speaking to any terrorist organisation while they were still killing people. His response on this occasion was not the frustration that he had demonstrated at the previous meeting rather an acceptance of the position without admitting that absolutely nothing could be done.

5. Fr Reid then said that one of the most difficult subjects for the current Republican movements was that of a ceasefire. He said that the movement had lost most of its authority and credibility in 74/75 because nothing of a political nature took place and the security forces had spent the entire time picking up information etc. When it ended recriminations just stopped short of killing some of those who had been involved.

5. According to Fr Reid the impasse was the reason that the talks between John Hume and Gerry Adams had taken place with the purpose

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of creating some sort of a pan nationalist/republican movement - apparently John Hume had no problem with this approach except the very obvious one, the violence, and that he too had found himself in the position of saying to Gerry Adams that there was little he would be able to do to retain his credibility if he allied himself to an organisation which was clearly supportive of violence. At this point Fr Reid told me that Gerry Adams has already given some signals publicly that he was prepared to look at an alternative to the "armed struggle". I responded very sceptically to this particular statement saying that it was hardly in keeping with the sort of things which were being done and said on behalf of the republican movement at the moment. Fr Reid replied saying that of course you would expect them to say that they were continuing to keep up the effort no matter what sort of a debate was going on. He seemed surprised that I even raised this particular point and went on to say that it was the same in every type of organisation where there was an army and politicians involved and commented that he could see from recent events that our politicians had some trouble with the army in much the same way as Sinn Fein politicians have trouble with their particular army.

6. He then asked me if there was any possibility that Gerry Adams or his driver (he named him as Eamon McCaughan or McCaughey and a member of Sinn Fein) could be issued with a gun because of the likelihood of a loyalist attack. He said that Adams who goes to Mass every Sunday, had recently been going to different chapels not least because, not too long ago, when he was attending St John's chapel some of his people had identified, what they described as loyalist, gunmen on a motorcycle waiting in the graveyard just as Mass was ending - the alleged gunmen apparently left hurriedly when they realised that they had been identified.

7. He ended by saying that he would be in touch again soon.

Comment

8. At no time did Fr Reid say he was acting as an intermediary and I am still unclear as to whether he is acting independently or

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otherwise though I am sure that he is speaking on a fairly regular basis to Gerry Adams who either knows or assumes that he is in conversation with others. I trust Fr Reid sufficiently to believe that he respects the confidentiality of our discussions.

9. During our discussion he volunteered the information that he is going to see the Cardinal today and presumably coincidentally the Cardinal has asked me to call with him on 15 September. It will be interesting to see if the Cardinal is aware of the current debate within Sinn Féin/PIRA or of Fr Reid's activities. I will not, of course, raise the topic with him.

10. Finally it is clear from Fr Reid that he regards John Hume is a major influence with all concerned and also that he trusts Mr Hume's political judgement.

(signed)

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