

Dermot Nally
Papers

UCDA P254/39

Meeting with Reverend Roy Magee

W. 1. *W. 1. [unclear]*
John 30/9/73
For [unclear]
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C. C. S. O. U. J. [unclear]

At the Taoiseach's request, I met with Revd. Roy Magee, Presbyterian Minister at Dundonald, (at the La Mon Hotel) following his appearance on T.V. suggesting that this was a critical time for Northern Ireland and that there was an opportunity for peace. He was reported subsequently as having urged the Loyalist paramilitaries, with whom he is in regular contact as a peacemaker, to desist from their attacks on SDLP councillors.

He confirmed it as his view that the Provisional IRA were seriously looking for peace, and he said he was involved in some efforts at dialogue between the UDA and the IRA. He himself had been working on some broad principles, the two key ones being:

"We respect the right of coexistence between all who abide by the law, regardless of religious, cultural, national, or political aspirations"

"We defend the right of anyone to seek constitutional change by peaceful and legitimate means".

There was another principle, which would command less agreement, that the political future of Northern Ireland was for the people of Northern Ireland themselves without outside interference:

He said he felt good progress was being made, until the joint Hume-Adams statement on Saturday. He also felt that many of the Unionist politicians were very deliberately fanning the flames and trying to incite the loyalist paramilitaries into action.

I conveyed to him three messages:

1. The Taoiseach and the Irish Government are totally committed to peace, which would be to the benefit of the whole island, but particularly to the Unionist community, which had borne much of the violence of the last 20 years.

2. The Irish Government would not be party to any attempt to secure a permanent cessation of violence in exchange, for example, for joint authority/sovereignty, or a guarantee of a united Ireland. The political future of Northern Ireland could not be predetermined in this fashion. At most, there could be agreement on broad principles, similar to the ones he was working on with the UDA.
3. The principle of consent was absolutely accepted by the Government and by all the parties in the South. The agreement and the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland was essential to any such major constitutional change. (I stated that in my view the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which essentially gave the Irish Government a consultative voice, did not fall into this category, but in any case any new Agreement would have to have Unionist participation).

The final point he made was a plea that the Irish Government in its public statements pay more attention to the Unionist consensus as well as Nationalist ones.



29 September, 1993.

P.S. I subsequently had lunch with Alban Maginnis, Leader of the SDLP group, at Belfast City council. He said Hendron's statement had reflected annoyance at being left in complete ignorance of what was going on, rather than disagreement with the process. In his view, the joint statement reflected internal party pressures but also he had been given to understand by Hume, positive signals from John Major.