

CONFIDENTIAL

RJA/423/91/SH

FROM: R J ALSTON  
US(POL)

6 March 1991

*PA not movement  
of the Priests*

PUS/115  
- 7 MAR 1991  
N.I.O. LONDON

cc PS/PUS (L&B) - B  
Mr Thomas - B  
Mr McNeill - B  
Mr Petch - B

MR PILLING - B

PA 23699 A

FATHER RAYMOND MURRAY

In the course of a PAB organised visit to Armagh yesterday I spent some 45 minutes with Father Raymond Murray. In the course of this he made some comments on the Provisional movement which reflected a somewhat different historical perspective from most other commentators and may be worth recording.

2. He said that in his view Gerry Adams had been at his strongest, and had had the best chance to politicise at the Provisional movement, in the years between the end of the hunger strike and the Enniskillen bombing. That event, and a number of other subsequent events, such as the broadcasting ban, had sufficiently weakened his position vis a vis "the militants". He and Father Reid had worked quite hard up to a year or so ago to encourage the Provisionals to develop a new approach based on a broad nationalist coalition with the SDLP and the Irish. However Mr Haughey's weakened internal position had made it harder for him to pursue this path. Although he believes that contact between the SDLP and Sinn Fein had not entirely stopped, and the priests efforts could be picked up again, he was relatively gloomy about the prospect of making further headway in this direction. He added that it was extremely difficult to know precisely what the Provisional movement wanted to achieve, which might in turn reflect the dividing nature of the internal debate.

3. I commented that the present Secretary of State had made a number of comments which John Hume at least regarded as highly positive in this context (which he acknowledged) and said that he had himself reinforced with people in "the Movement") and that it was impossible for any Secretary of State to move further or envisage an instant place for Sinn Fein in the political process whilst violence continued with episodes like the Downing Street attack. (This he acknowledged without substantive comment).

Comment

4. This more down beat attitude to the developments of recent months may reflect a negative assessment of Gerry Adams' chances of making any headway. It might however simply mean that he is less involved than he may have been in the past.

[signed]

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