

32

SECRET AND PERSONAL

PAB/6805/DMcN/RN

FROM: D G McNEILL, PAB
DATE: 16 JANUARY 1991

PUS/103
17 JAN 1991
N.I.O. LONDON

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) -B [1&2]
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B [3&4]
- Mr Ledlie - B [5]
- Mr Pilling - B [6]
- Mr Alston - B [7]
- Mr Deverell - B [8]
- Mr Petch - B [9]
- Mr Marsh [10]
- File [11]

RA 23699 A

POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS: ARCHBISHOP ROBIN EAMES

1. PUS and I met Archbishop Eames yesterday and discussed recent developments on the Provisionals "front". We let him know, without being specific, that there was some evidence of movement on a front other than that involving the chaplains.

Chaplains

2. Archbishop Eames confirmed that both he and Archbishop Daly were kept fully informed by the chaplains. Both Archbishops were concerned about the effect that the chaplains involvement was having on the two men in a personal sense and Archbishop Eames did specifically mention concern about Fr Murphy's health. Both Archbishops realised that the Government was still considering the issue carefully but both were keen to know as soon as was appropriate if Government concluded that there was no longer a need for the chaplains to maintain contact. He asked, that if we reached that conclusion, that we would tell the Archbishops as well as the Chaplains. We gave that assurance. It was clear that, although there was no question but that Archbishop Eames approved of what the chaplains were doing, both he and Archbishop Daly would be glad if there was no longer a need for them to play that role. He also said that while he did not know whether the

SECRET AND PERSONAL

People to whom the chaplains were speaking were significant in the Provisionals' organisation it was clear from the contacts over the Christmas period that those people to whom the chaplains were speaking knew what was going on in the Provisional movement.

3. The Archbishop did express his appreciation for the way in which the contacts between the chaplains and the NIO had been managed recently. He said that he and his colleagues realise from the detailed contact with the NIO that we were taking their work seriously and that helped lift some of the burden off the chaplains.

4. Finally Archbishop Daly, Bishop Poyntz, he and the chaplains were due to meet in the next few weeks to review the situation. I offered my assistance by way of a discussion with him or them before or during that meeting.

Reaction of the majority if there were to be dialogue with the Provisionals

5. Archbishop Eames was extremely cautious in his assessment of the likely reaction of the majority if dialogue with the Provisionals were to take place. He said that on the one hand and depending on what concessions were made to the Provisionals the business and commercial community and some thinking "unionists" would find that acceptable provided the dialogue produced an end to violence. However unionist right wingers would not and/or their reaction or the price which was paid by Government could well force an end to the present talks process. He confessed that he really could not judge what might happen but he said that the concern and suspicion of unionists and the bitterness felt by that community locally and province-wide was deep. So much would depend on whether the end of violence was long lasting and unconditional and on the extent to which unionists could be assured that they were not being rejected and the republican movement rewarded.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

Page No 2 of 3

Another Secretary of State speech

6. We discussed the merits of another speech by the Secretary of State aimed at reassuring unionists and at the same time holding the door open for the Provisionals if violence were to end. Archbishop Eames saw merit in this sometime soon - no specific timescale was mentioned. However he counselled against a speech which treated both messages equally. He thought that unionists were becoming edgy and he suggested that if such a speech were to be made it should major on reassuring unionists and that any inviting "messages" should be low key but on the record; however he suggested the significance of these could be communicated in other ways to those at whom they were aimed.

Mr Devereall
Mr Petch

[Signed DMcN]

POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS

D G McNEILL

Political Affairs Division

Ext 2238 SH

RN/6341

2. The overall assessment of the situation within the Provisional movement was that a significant faction were considering changing the current "dual strategy" for a political one.

1. It appeared that Provisional thinking about a new strategy had been developing over about the last two years. Despite the strong desire of Mr Adams to see an end to the political development process, it was therefore likely that the motivation for considering a change of strategy did not result simply from a fear that the process might succeed. Nevertheless, the process itself had increased the pressure on the Provisionals. A genuine strategic reassessment had probably been undertaken because the policy of using violence had not proved successful.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

Page No 3 of 3

SECRET AND PERSONAL

JEN/PUB/21176