

SECRET AND PERSONAL

PAB/6668/DGMcN/RG

FROM: D G McNEILL, PAB
DATE: 21 NOVEMBER 1990

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cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) [1&2]
PS/Minister of State (B&L) [3&4]
PS/PUS (B&L) [5&6]
Mr Pilling [7]
Mr Ledlie [8]
Mr Alston [9]
Mr Deverell [10]
Mr Thomas [11]
Mr Petch [12]
Mr Marsh [13]
File [14]

Note For The Record

BISHOP CAHAL DALY: POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS

1. PUS and I discussed this subject on 20/11/90 with Bishop Cahal Daly at his home.
2. The Bishop said that he had recently met with the two Maze chaplains to discuss their contacts with PIRA/Sinn Fein. He made clear that the RC Church (and the Church of Ireland) does not wish these two men to be regarded as intermediaries. They were merely men who felt it their duty to try to assist those willing to consider a more moral route. He said that he was fully satisfied with the integrity and the common sense of both men whom he had known for some time and who had worked hard to become acceptable to people from both sides. He was confident that the two men from PIRA/Sinn Fein to whom the chaplains were talking were men who were speaking for PIRA/Sinn Fein as an organisation.
3. The Bishop fully recognised the enormity of the difficulties which Government would face in dealing with people representing organisations engaged in violence. He said that no Government could be seen to be doing that.
4. He said that he knew that PIRA/Sinn Fein was considering a series of questions which had been relayed to them through the chaplains on his behalf and which had been suggested by John

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Blelloch. These questions were aimed at trying to flesh out what was meant by "meaningful dialogue" - a phrase used earlier by the PIRA/Sinn Fein contacts - and also to find out more about the organisation's intentions should "meaningful dialogue" be entered upon and come to nothing.

5. The Bishop was satisfied that some in the organisation were interested in seriously reviewing their future strategy. He had seen papers which debated the extent to which PIRA/Sinn Fein's concentration on the "armed struggle" and on green nationalism was inhibiting its ability to develop its socialist policies and its ability to attract more political support for these policies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

6. The Bishop recognised the significance of the Secretary of State's "British Presence" speech and thought that it would be helpful in promoting change within PIRA/Sinn Fein. However he did say that there was still a long way to go before that organisation was ready to accept that the "armed struggle" was not the way forward. He said that the papers showed that their political thinking was still somewhat naive, superficial and out of date.

7. Without commenting on the desirability of this he did pointedly refer to the fact that the contacts with whom the chaplains have been dealing had linked their proposals for movement to contact at any level with Government - including civil servants.

8. In closing the Bishop agreed with PUS that it would be helpful if Government were to continue to take opportunities to point up again the messages in the "British Presence" speech though he appreciated that it would not be sensible to repeat these every 2 or 3 weeks.

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