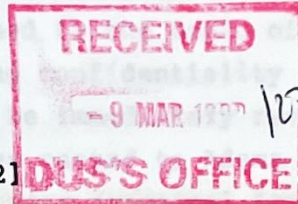


FROM: J McCONNELL
AS(PAB)

8 March 1990

cc PS/PUS (L&B) [3&4]
Mr Ledlie [5]
Mr Burns [6]
Mr Deverell [7]
Mr Daniell [8]



PS/SofS (L&B) [1&2]

DISCUSSION WITH FATHER REID

As pre-arranged by telephone on 4 March I met Father Reid in my office on Tuesday 6 March - the meeting lasted about an hour, details as follows.

2. After a short discussion on prison matters Father Reid moved on to what he is most interested in, ie creating some sort of dialogue which will help to "give the IRA an alternative to their armed struggle". He then raised the point he had left me with at the last meeting which was how would I respond to an invitation from Cardinal O Fiaich etc. I replied as instructed emphasising that it was difficult to see how anybody could believe there was a desire in Sinn Fein/PIRA to cease violence whenever the killing is clearly continuing.

3. Father Reid went on as though I had never spoken saying that if such a discussion took place it would be on the basis of an open agenda with neither side setting pre-conditions but the Cardinal could presumably set conditions of his own such as pointing out to Gerry Adams that it would be very strange if people were being killed and bombs were going off before or immediately after such a discussion took place. I went on to say that it was difficult to imagine what led him to believe that Gerry Adams and his team were

*1. Minutes from meeting
Mark? Add to me on PUS
be add to me on PUS
2. ? ? ? ? ?
3. ? ? ? ? ?*

in the least bit interested in pursuing a political path. His only response to this was that his contacts led him to believe it.

4. He then returned to the topic of a possible meeting convened by the Cardinal saying confidentiality could be ensured and, when I grimaced at this, he immediately reminded me of "the British document" which was passed to Adams and had not subsequently leaked. I asked him, in a very sceptical fashion, would the Provisional IRA be sent on four weeks holidays in order to preserve such confidentiality? He replied, rather irritably and facetiously, that they could be told a story for instance there was a gun running exercise going on or even send them away to count whatever guns they had. He also said at this stage that "associates of Gerry Adams" would have a better chance than Adams himself in convincing the "military men" that such a proposition was worthwhile (he only ever refers to the military side or the IRA never the Provisional Army Council).

5. Father Reid then said, at present, there was a fairly moderate leadership on the military side which he was afraid might change (I am sure he was not giving me any signals that any change was imminent but he mentioned within passing that ripples had come from Donegal in relation to Adams Presidency at the time of the Ardfeis - no further explanation given). He clearly demonstrated, once again, his ability to make a clear distinction between the military side and the political side and though he has in the past agreed there is cross-membership he has always refused to accept that the organisation is a seamless robe.

6. Father Reid then got rather agitated whenever he started talking about the position his own Order's (Redemptorist) initiative had reached saying that when he had been off for a few weeks it had been

entrusted to another priest who had failed to make any real progress. Gerry Adams has not yet moved on the document but indicated to him recently that they could not wait forever for responses. My understanding, from what Father Reid was saying, is that the standin had not pursued the Irish Government vigorously in an effort to get their blessing to "the Irish Peace Conference" (as recorded in paragraph 2(v) of my minute dated 27.2.90 he implied that the document had been given to DFA by John Hume but he is now implying that the Redemptorists are pursuing the Irish Government direct). He professed that he was still a little hopeful that some progress could be made in this area and referred me to two remarks made by Mr Haughey about the possibility of setting up an all-Ireland Forum which could be attended by politicians from all sides to achieve a peaceful solution (he was unable to say when and where Mr Haughey said this except to assure me that both statements had been made in public). The Cardinal was apparently fairly insistent that the Redemptorists give full information to HMG saying that it HMG is a major player and is a mistake not to keep it fully informed.

7. He ended by saying that he would be talking to some more people over the next few days and asked if he could ring me on Sunday evening with the name of a prisoner that he was particularly concerned about - I agreed.

Comment

8. I am still of the opinion that Father Reid is the moving force behind this particular approach but I am also sure that he has a good working knowledge of Gerry Adam and "his associates". I also believe that the Cardinal must know what Father Reid is doing because at one point during the conversation he said that he knew

the Cardinal thought highly of me and I doubt, marvellous though I am, that I am a normal topic of conversation between Father Reid and the Cardinal.

9. Father Reid continues to take comfort from his "knowledge" that Gerry Adams is still considering his document and he also seems to have some confidence that the Irish Government has not dismissed the idea out of hand.

Sub
10. Finally, on another issue, he asked me if there was any evidence available that could help him to persuade prisoners to move from the Maze to Maghaberry because he himself believed it was beneficial to their prospects of release if such a move was made. If such information is available I am sure he would want to take it directly to the people in Sinn Fein who deal with the prisoners. I would be grateful for advice as to whether this should be taken forward or not.

[signed]

J E McCONNELL

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