

~~SECRET and PERSONAL~~

ROM/953/89/SH

FROM: R O MILES
US(POL)

13 December 1989

cc PS/SofS (L&B) [3&4]
PS/PUS (L&B) [5&6]
Mr Thomas [7]
Mr J McConnell [8]
Mr Daniell [9]
Mr Kirk [10]~~MR BURNS~~ [1]

REID/MURRAY PAPERS

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute on 6 December to PS/Secretary of State. If I may say so, I entirely agree with your comments recorded in paragraph 3 to the effect that this initiative seems to have nothing to offer the unionists, at whom it is ostensibly directed. Like so many initiatives from the nationalist side, it assumes that the battle can be won by persuading the unionists that they are not really unionists at all.

2. I also understand Mr Hume's opposition. For good reasons of personal and political amour propre, he wants to stay in control of the epic struggle for the soul of nationalism, in which he represents the forces of good. The role of the Church and Dublin is to applaud from outside the ring, not to confuse matters by stepping out in front of him.

3. But I am not so sure that we can go all the way with Mr Hume. If I remember rightly, Father Reid told Mr McConnell that he accepted that the initiative would not appeal to unionists, and that its real object was to give the supporters of the Provisional movement a course of action to think about other than violence. In this his objectives are very like the objectives with which Mr Hume embarked on his talks with Sinn Fein last year. Mr Hume's initiative was high risk for the SDLP, but was I believe justified by the outcome. The Reid/Murray initiative seems to me to carry less risk, and to have the same purpose.

4. While we cannot endorse, still less become involved in it, I therefore do not see that it is in our interest that it should be stalled.

5. It is interesting that Mr Hume believes that, insofar as Cardinal O Fiaich is involved, he is acting behind the backs of his hierarchy. Like you, I was struck by the very guarded terms in which the Cardinal has lent his name to this enterprise. I would

assume that the Papal Nuncio's approach to Sir N Fenn, about which he wrote to you on 21 November, did not reflect the Reid/Murray initiative, and was probably made in ignorance of it. Nevertheless, I think we should consider whether, in his response to Archbishop Gerada, Sir N Fenn should go beyond suggesting that the Church should reinforce its denunciation of violence, and say that the Church could perhaps make a valuable contribution by considering in what way those who are now tempted to support republican violence could be persuaded that other forms of political activity are open to them which could be more fruitful, as well as less wicked.

6. All the above relates to the initiative covered in these papers. I continue to believe that Father Reid also has a different purpose in cultivating Mr McConnell, and will return to it.

[signed]

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