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FROM: R P LEMON
PS/Michael Ancram
23 July 1996

cc PS/Secretary of State -B
PS/Sir John Wheeler -B
PS/Michael Ancram -B
PS/PUS -B
PS/Sir David Fell -B
Mr Thomas -B
Mr Legge -B
Mr Steele -B
Mr Ray -B
Mr Leach -B
Mr Stephens -B
Mr Hill -B
Mr Perry -B
Mr Maccabe -B
Mr Holmes, No 10 -B
HMA Dublin -B

MBM

L4

29/7

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

MICHAEL ANCRAM'S MEETING WITH CARDINAL DALY AND BISHOP BRADY IN ARMAGH ON 22 JULY 1996

Following a number of public statements and newspaper articles recording Cardinal Daly's views on the handling of Drumcree and the fall out amongst the wider Nationalist community in Northern Ireland, Michael Ancram visited the Cardinal in Armagh on 22 July. The meeting was at the Minister's request and lasted about 1 hour 15 minutes. Before the meeting itself began, Cardinal Daly asked the Minister if he minded if Bishop Brady joined the meeting, the Minister said he did not and the Bishop arrived a few minutes after the start.

Summary

The atmosphere was positive. Cardinal Daly said on more than one occasion that he was encouraged by the news of an independent review looking at parades. The Cardinal said that it was important for the Churches to work together and stressed the need for continuing dialogue amongst the political parties. He acknowledged the

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difficulties under which the RUC had operated, in particular intimidation and said he would be meeting Mr Flanagan on Tuesday (23 July). There was no time lost to negative raking over old ground and the Minister was very encouraged by the much more calm and measured approach taken by the Cardinal.

Detail

Cardinal Daly began by referring to the "tragic events" of the last week and said that he was very worried about what might happen in Derry. He said he feared groups in different estates getting together and exploiting a volatile situation. He said he hoped that local politicians would take account of recent events and ensure the situation in Derry in August did not get out of hand.

Michael Ancram said that events of the last week had impinged on some politicians. He said the RUC had been in a very difficult position when on a number of occasions they simply did not have enough men to clear away road blocks and maintain order during a carefully planned period of civil disorder. The Minister said that there would be an announcement in the next 2 days about a Review which would be looking at the experience of the Summer and lessons to be gained. The Minister said that he understood the depth of feeling in the Nationalist community following Drumcree.

Cardinal Daly said that there was an "equal and opposite" depth of feeling in the Protestant community. He said perceptions were different but there was a lack of understanding in both communities. He said he understood that the RUC had been horrified by events and that community relations had been seriously set back. He was horrified to have heard of threats of intimidation to RUC members and others. The Minister said that he had read what the Cardinal had said about talks and agreed that they were central. He said the good working relationship with the Irish Government continued and was essential but it was not possible to dictate the pace of talks - the Governments cannot push too hard. At the same time there was a need to maintain the momentum in the talks process.

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Cardinal Daly agreed that dialogue between the parties was key and said that he was concerned that pressure might grow on the Prime Minister suggesting that his policy with the Irish Government was fundamentally mistaken. He said he thought that although it was not the only show in town it was the only show possible. He said many in the right wing press had been pessimistic about the talks process and were almost beginning to convince themselves that it would not succeed. The Minister said that the Prime Minister would not budge on his policy and that he had been upset by the Taoiseach's comments last week. The Prime Minister had since seen members of the SDLP and had repeated that there was no other way; there remained a need for patience and a determination to pursue the talks process. The Minister said that whilst there had been genuine shock in the Nationalist community there had also been deep and angry reaction on the other side of the equation. Cardinal Daly agreed there was a need for respect from both communities and he asked how to persuade Unionists that the Union was not under threat - talk of a United Ireland had gone. Bishop Brady added that Sinn Fein language had changed and they had recently called for dialogue although they were not able to say these things too loudly. Cardinal Daly said that there was a big duty on Sinn Fein to persuade the Unionist community that there had been a 'sea change'. The Minister said that it was often a question of fear and uncertainty and there was a need to try to change people's mindsets on both sides.

Bishop Brady said that some of the events of the last week could have happened in either Dublin or Dundalk, initiated and often perpetuated by young people who felt alienated living in areas of deprivation. He said that although there had been relative peace many young people in these areas had not seen any real benefits because of their socio economic environment. The RUC had not been policing very effectively and many local residents sought a return to the harsh order imposed by the IRA. Given that set of circumstances the resulting disorder should not been seen as very surprising.

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Cardinal Daly said that the announcement of a review would calm many in the Nationalist community but if there were those Unionists who regarded it as a plot, how could you reassure them? The Minister said that that would come through the political process.

Cardinal Daly asked if any contacts were possible with Sinn Fein at any level. The Minister said that each request would be dealt with on its merits but there had been no recent requests. Cardinal Daly said that he had taken soundings and believed that there were those in Sinn Fein who felt that if an agreement could be reached and a guarantee given that it would not be overturned, then they might "review progress". He said he thought that they would also seek a number of confidence-building measures in particular in the area of prisons. He asked what message could be given to such intermediaries. The Minister said that HMG was still prepared to talk if there was an unequivocal restoration of the cease-fire. However, if Sinn Fein continued to exclude themselves they would, as time went on, find it more difficult to join the process because it would have moved on and so they would have to accept decisions which had already been taken in their absence.

Bishop Brady returned to the issue of young people living in deprived areas and said that many of those living in those estates would not see the result of their actions in terms of lost opportunities to their own areas. The Minister said that there had been a number of examples in education recently where he had been able to allocate funding as a direct result of the "peace dividend". That would not be possible if resources were taken away.

Cardinal Daly asked what the Churches could do. The Minister said that we should try to learn the lessons of the last few weeks and move forward. He said that there was a need to pull together and it had been shown that the 4 Church leaders spoke from a position of strength when they worked together. The Cardinal agreed and asked the Minister to convey that view to other Church leaders.

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Cardinal Daly said that he believed Sinn Fein were working to find a compromise in Derry but it was felt that the strength of feeling in the area was such that Sinn Fein could not force their will. He said that he had taken tremendous heart from Sinn Fein holding back and the Loyalist ceasefire being maintained. He believed that had there been the desire to do so, the IRA could have organised a co-ordinated series of violent protests which could have inflamed the situation much more. He said he had heard that Mr McKenna in Garvaghy Road did not "stir it up". He said talks were needed and were still the key, they were the "only way to test each other".

Cardinal Daly repeated that the importance of the review was to show that lessons had been learned by the experiences of the last few weeks and that this was a way of avoiding previous mistakes and to gain support from a wide constituency. He said that was a need to co-exist in peace.

The meeting ended with a reference by the Cardinal to the rationalisation of education boards (see separate note) and an undertaking by both the Minister and Cardinal Daly to "keep in touch".

(Signed)

R P LEMON

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