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Conversation with Fr. Denis Faul, 18 November

Fr. Faul telephoned me. He made the following points:

- He supports the Anglo-Irish Agreement
- There are two elements in the Government presentation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which he doesn't like. Firstly that the Agreement will help nationalists identify with the institutions of government. Nationalists don't like the institutions of government and it is only if those institutions are changed that they will come to identify with them.
- Secondly the emphasis that the Agreement is designed to help the SDLP. He presumes that the Agreement is aimed at people who do not vote for the SDLP.
- The best line for the Government to follow is to say that the Agreement is designed to bring about justice and fair play and a better future for the children.
- He does not wish the Secretariat to become the property of the SDLP and would stress that people like himself should continue to have access.
- As nationalists see it the SDLP have pulled a fast one claiming credit for the Secretariat.
- Mr. Haughey's rejection of the Agreement has the useful advantage of sowing doubts in unionist minds about the benefits of the Agreement for nationalists. His opposition might help them to believe that maybe there is something in the Agreement for unionists.

- He strongly believes that prisoners should be released before Christmas, both republican and loyalist and that this would have a very beneficial effect on the communities.

I also spoke to Seamus Mallon who made the following points:

- He was very critical of the remarks by Deputy Maurice Manning which gave the impression that there were secret elements to the Agreement. Such claims should not be repeated.
- He thought it very important not to overstress the benefits of the Agreement for unionists. He doesn't think the unionists will respond to such overtures at this time.
- Provisional Sinn Fein are bound to be very worried at the present moment. Mallon was bitterly disappointed at the response of the Opposition to the Agreement. He said that he has been under a very great deal of pressure but that he intends to stick to his views no matter what others think. He also noted that the editor of the Irish Press had come under very great pressure.

D. O Ceallaigh

19 November 1985

cc: *RMH*
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Box