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SECRET

N. Huxley *S22622* ✓
Meeting with Cardinal O Fiaich, 23rd October 1985

I met yesterday with Cardinal O Fiaich at his home in Armagh. I briefed him in a general and unspecific way about the broad parameters of what might be contained in an Anglo-Irish agreement. In response the Cardinal said that he would not be over-excited about the emerging agreement, because nationalists would clearly prefer to get more, but in so far as it represents some progress it would have his support.

He believes that the success or the failure of an agreement of the sort envisaged will depend largely on its effectiveness in producing better relations between the security forces and the minority community. There has been a distinct improvement in the behaviour of the security forces in the last year or two. He has no doubt that this is due in large measure to the fact that Sir John Hermon is open to representations in these matters from people such as himself and from the Irish Government. He mentioned one recent incident where he passed on papers to Sir John Hermon and asked Sir John to look into the matter and to let the parochial clergy in Armagh, who had raised the issue with the Cardinal, know in due course what had happened. The Cardinal added that the man in question in the parochial house would be away for three weeks, and that Sir John did not need to come back to them until that time. However in the meantime the RUC Constable who was responsible for the difficulties has been moved out of Armagh. The Cardinal is encouraged by such positive responses from the RUC and certainly gave me the impression that he thought an Irish Government role in Northern Ireland could further help in matters of this nature.

Cardinal O Fiaich said that the UDR have improved in recent times in Armagh. He had himself been instrumental in having the UDR men charged with the murder of Adrian Carroll because he had ensured that the statements taken by Fr. Murray and others were given personally into Sir John Harmon's hands. He

is annoyed however that this has become public knowledge among journalists in Belfast and it could only have happened because some RUC man who had seen his car at RUC headquarters in Knock had mentioned the fact to journalists in Belfast. An incident like that murder by the UDR could of course significantly damage any Anglo-Irish agreement. Strenuous efforts would need to be made to avoid it because there are elements both in the police and in the UDR who are connected with sectarian paramilitaries, and many officers who will not be well disposed to an Agreement.

During the course of our conversation the Cardinal raised the question of how Sinn Fein would respond to an Anglo-Irish agreement. He has noted the statements which they have made in recent weeks that they do not intend to mount a campaign of violence aimed specifically at an Anglo-Irish agreement. He also had noted that Ed Moloney in a recent article in Fortnight magazine had said that the Provisionals believe that they should not give an excuse to the British to fulfil their real aim in the Anglo-Irish negotiations which is joint Anglo-Irish action against Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA, and that this underlies their new policy.

Cardinal O Fiaich was also concerned about the possible opposition in the South to an Anglo-Irish agreement and he specifically mentioned that differences among Southern nationalists could cause problems for Northern nationalists. He believes it would be best if all nationalists in the Republic could agree with the emerging proposals because this would make life much easier for the SDLP.

He jokingly referred to the widespread presence of the British Army in South Armagh this week, with sandbag encampments all over the place as a group of young adults playing at toy soldiers. He again jokingly said that he hoped that I had travelled up through Southern Armagh so that I could have a good awareness of this.

Doe
D. O Ceallaigh

24 October 1985

c.c. Taoiseach, Tanaiste, Minister,
Minister for Justice, Attorney
General, Messrs. Nally, Ward,
Donlon, Dorr, Quigley, Lillis