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Secret

Mr. Hare

*Mr. Githi
S.H.*

Discreet

Do see please Note

*The Cardinal is meet in
the Prime Minister to day*

Meeting with Cardinal Daly

*From
members,
to your files.*



*27
20/7/75*

18/7

1. I met last night with Cardinal Daly at his residence in Armagh. His co-adjutor Monsignor Sean Brady, Ambassador-designate Barrington and Mr. David Donoghue, (on a pre-posting trip in Northern Ireland), were also present for most of the meeting.

2. The Cardinal told me in strict confidence that about a month ago he had had a secret approach from Michael Ancram on the decommissioning issue. Ancram had sketched out a possible approach he wished the Cardinal to put to the IRA. This involved a statement of principle on a definitive abandonment of violence, and, secondly, the designation of some agreed agency or authority to act as decommissioning agent. This authority would receive IRA weaponry "in trust for the Irish people". The process would begin with the handover of what the Cardinal considered a "substantial part" of their arsenal. (Note: Ancram's ideas seem designed to be as forthcoming as possible on the optics of a handover to meet republican sensitivities. The notion of the weapons "being held in trust for the Irish people" seems to suggest the Irish Government as the agency, but that point was left open. The Cardinal's account did not focus on "modalities").

3. The Cardinal had pursued this option through Fr. Alec Reid. He was informed by Fr. Reid that Adams had gone to the IRA leadership about a fortnight ago with that proposal. They undertook to reflect on it. The reply when it came a short while ago, was a categorical rejection. According to the

Cardinal, they indicated they were not going to do anything whatsoever to help the British Government out of a difficulty entirely of the latter's own making. The Cardinal had the impression that Adams might have overplayed his hand in this enterprise, and that he was "panicky" as a result.

4. The Cardinal is meeting Prime Minister Major at 5 o'clock this afternoon. Major will be accompanied by Mayhew and Ancram. I briefed him in broad terms on the present state of the Government's discussion with the British. I laid particular stress on the prisons issue, as an entirely gratuitous liability in the present circumstances, and one where the Cardinal would have a strong pastoral authority in arguing forcibly with Prime Minister Major. I also filled him in on the Governments views on decommissioning, and the importance we attached to political progress.
5. The Cardinal spoke with great concern and feeling about the severe dangers he thought the peace process now faced. The ceasefire had come about because ruthless paramilitaries had been persuaded of the value of a political alternative. That was based on a relationship with the SDLP, the Irish Government, and the US Government. His sense now was that the Republicans now were uncertain of all three of these relationships. The Cardinal stressed also the fundamental shift which he believed had taken place in Sinn Féin strategy away from the simplistic unity policy and the need to consolidate that shift through political movement.
6. I asked the Cardinal to brief us if anything emerged from his meeting he felt we should know about.

Sean OhUiginn

19 July 1995