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Meeting with Fr. Brendan Callanan,
Provincial of the Redemptorists,
8th August 1995

1. Fr. Brendan Callanan, Provincial of the Redemptorists, came to see me at his request on the 8th August.
2. He said he had just returned from a spell in the Philippines. He was concerned to find Fr. Reid worried about the present situation as never before. He said Fr. Reid's involvement in the ceasefire had not been a merely personal one, but had the backing of the Order. Fr. Callanan said he had seen Fr. Reid during many difficult moments, but never had seen him so fraught as at present, saying that "it's lost" - not, Fr. Callanan stressed, as an actual prediction, but as a measure of dejection.
3. I asked him where the kernel of the difficulty lay. Fr. Callanan said that the commitment to round-table negotiations was the key. There was a deep worry that the Government did not understand fully the complexities of the issues involved, and that the situation "might be much more dangerous than one would gather from reading the newspapers".
4. Fr. Callanan also raised the possibility of an IRA statement on the anniversary of the ceasefire, which "might be frightening for all of us". I pointed to the damage that anything like an ultimatum might do, both in terms of undermining confidence in the permanence of the ceasefire, and therefore any willingness to respond to it, and also in making any progress more difficult on the British side. Fr. Callanan emphasised that Fr. Reid was trying to forestall any such statement.

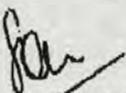
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5. I said I would ensure that the Taoiseach and Tanaiste were advised of the Provincial's demarche, which added the authority of the Order to the deep concerns already conveyed to us by Fr. Reid. I urged in return that everything possible should be done to remind the IRA that progress was being made, even if much more slowly than we would all wish, and the drastic effect on opinion, especially in the South, if the high hopes of the ceasefire were replaced by an even deeper despair at its likely or actual collapse.

6. I urged that Fr. Reid should also mediate between the very formalistic views of the IRA and the more complicated scenarios which all politicians had to factor into their calculations to meet changing circumstances. It would be an awesome responsibility to agree that some formalistic breach of an understanding had occurred, if that were in fact to open the way to or appear to justify the horrors of renewed violence.

6. Fr. Callanan said there was a strong feeling that if the Government did not accept the terms which had been agreed for the ceasefire, then they should seek to renegotiate a new one. I said that that would have obvious and chilling implications for the continuation of the present ceasefire. I urged a resolute and optimistic approach, given the enormous stakes involved. Fr. Callanan agreed that Fr. Reid was also by temperament someone who always sought solutions and that was important to focus on the progress made and not just the progress which had yet to be reached.

7. I agreed to convey to the Taoiseach and Tanaiste his core message, which he stressed a number of times, that the dangers in the present situation were much greater than appeared publicly. (In an earlier conversation, Fr. Reid thought mid-September to be the most dangerous period).


Sean O hUiginn
8 August, 1995