

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code: 2002/8/483

Title: Memorandum from the Department of the Taoiseach regarding the opinions of the minority community in Northern on internment, the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary], and the British Army.

Creation Date(s): 24 September 1971

Level of description: Item

Extent and medium: 1 page

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Access Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

Taoiseach,

Rev. P. Murphy and Mr. T. Conaty, Belfast, called on me today, at their request.

They said that, as well as being officers of Belfast CCDC, dealing day-by-day with local problems, they are also officers of the Minority Rights Association, an apolitical 6-County organisation which meets regularly - with priests, doctors, teachers, skilled men, trade union officials etc. as members. These connections give them a broad base from which to assess minority opinion in N.I. Before the Tripartite talks they wished to have the following conveyed to the Taoiseach.

Minority opinion on internment had hardened altogether since the internment orders had been signed and since the opening of Long Kesh. Any settlement package offered by the British which did not include the ending of internment had no chance of acceptance by even moderate minority opinion.

While not of such immediate critical importance as internment the RUC are an important problem. Their attitude has been a major irritant since 1969 and if an otherwise tolerable settlement is arrived at, retention of the RUC as now constituted will be bound to jeopardise the settlement. This will be all the more tragic as effective policing is badly needed. The only satisfactory solution was the transfer of all Home Affairs functions to Westminster-courts, prosecution of offences, police and security.

There is a danger that the stupidities of the British Army would quickly negative a political settlement. They are dancing to the tune of the Provisionals and local commanders show no sophistication - witness the recent ~~the recent~~ Ardoyne incident where on a single unconfirmed telephone call they arrested six innocent people at dawn and antagonised the whole district. Their shortcomings were very apparent in the matter of public relations, e.g. issuing half-baked statements and later having to retract them.

Every effort must be made to sell a settlement package as a response to moderate grievance and not to the campaign of violence.

If the settlement package is a tolerable one including the ending of internment, Fr. Murphy and Mr. Conaty guarantee, through the CCDC and the Minority Rights Association, with help they hope to receive from the SDLP, to mount an offensive designed to alienate the bulk of the minority from the violent wing - who are clearly tolerated at present.

[Signature]
24/9