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SECRET

A-1 Section

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Meeting with Mr. Seamus Mallon, 4 October 1985

I met with Mr. Mallon at his home in Markethill on 4 October. He had been confined to the house by his doctor since his return home from hospital on 30 September. He is still weak and his wife said that in recent months he seemed to be tiring easily. He remains apprehensive about his health. He is also worried about his financial affairs and he thought that no matter what happens in terms of an Anglo-Irish agreement he will have to find some sort of work by the new year. He mentioned supply teaching. He has always said that if he returns to work he will forego active participation in politics and that implication was clearly given.

He has not made up his mind about whether he should support the emerging Anglo-Irish Agreement. He does not wish to oppose an Agreement but is concerned that the package may be inadequate to deal with nationalist grievance. In the light of what he said I would guess that when the day comes he will support the Agreement but that he will do so with little enthusiasm.

Some of his difficulties relate to the security and judicial area. His concern is that not enough has been achieved in reforming the RUC and, more particularly, the UDR. Nor has his desire for a joint court been met. A further cause for concern is that he feels that any progress made in the areas should be stated publicly on the day agreement is reached.

He has doubts about what he calls the logistics. His understanding had been that we hoped to have an Irish Government office situated in a nationalist area of Belfast so as to show a visible Irish Government presence in Northern Ireland. He is worried that the lack of visibility for what is

now envisaged may weaken the appeal of the package to Northern nationalists. He was particularly worried that the secretariat in Belfast might not be visible and might not be open to representations from some like himself. He wondered if there would be an Irish Cabinet Minister who would be concerned only with Northern Ireland, as was indicated in the Today Tonight programme of 2 October.

A further concern is that the package will be seen as an international agreement/treaty, which will give a status and an importance to the arrangements way beyond what is merited at this time. It is only with the passage of time that the arrangements will be seen to have/have not merited the description of an international agreement.

A further problem for him is the future role of the SDLP. He thinks that the party may wither away. The emerging agreement, he fears, will not provide enough for some SDLP workers to enable them to continue their party work. Some of these activists will leave the SDLP, as may some of their voters. The Sinn Fein strategy, which is designed to pick up the votes of dissolutioned nationalists, is very clever.

The new Ireland Forum created a new dimension. It enabled the constitutional nationalists of the North to become involved in politics with the nationalist parties in the South. It gave the SDLP an edge over Sinn Fein in the minds of Northern nationalists because it was only the SDLP and not Sinn Fein, who could engage in dialogue with southern nationalists. The SDLP cannot retreat from that position into Northern Ireland institutions without giving the advantage to Sinn Fein. It is possible that more than 50% of all the nationalists on the island may be opposed to these arrangements. (I took this to mean Fianna Fail, perhaps some SDLP and Sinn Fein, though he did not say that Fianna Fail would oppose the agreement). What would be the consequences of this he wondered?

He considers it essential therefore that there be some kind of all-Ireland arrangements (Forum Mark 2). He said that the paper he had given to me earlier in this matter (and which has been circulated) had been drafted a long time ago when circumstances were different and did not take account of the negotiations since that time. He clearly implied that the detail of the proposals in that paper are open to whatever change is necessary in the light of the negotiations. He said he hoped he could have a positive response from Government to that paper within the next three weeks (i.e. before a summit, though he didn't say this). He believes that the arrangements for a Forum Mark 2 should be made public at the same time as the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Later in our conversation he said that of the SDLP Constituency representatives, Pascal O'Hare would probably publicly oppose an agreement. He thought it most unlikely that any other member of the group would do so. He didn't mention what he himself would do.

Daithi O'Ceallaigh
7 October 1985.