



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2016/52/54
<b>Creation Dates:</b>	3 April 1986
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	5 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

~~SECRET~~

S20876

19003  
18829  
22537  
20876

*in by Lamby*  
*hm*  
*9/4*  
*9/16/86*

Meeting with Brian Feeny (SDLP), Belfast, 3 April 1986

I met Brian Feeny, SDLP Councillor for North Belfast, in Belfast on 3 April.

Among the points which he made to me were the following:

- The Agreement retains solid nationalist support in North Belfast. However, there is an urgent need to be able to point to concrete improvements which it has brought about. These are particularly required in the security area. The fact that UDR patrols in contact with the community are still unaccompanied by the RUC is a source of continuing embarrassment for advocates of the Agreement. Feeny cited in this respect the UDR patrol at the Castle Street entrance to the city centre as well as UDR patrols which he encountered on two occasions recently on the main Newry/Belfast road.
- He believes that the British Government will seek to represent any significant improvements that do occur as having nothing whatsoever to do with the Agreement. In this connection he referred to a briefing for visiting foreign journalists in which he recently participated (at the NIO's invitation). While he himself had praised the Agreement as a means of reducing nationalist alienation, of reconciling the two traditions etc., the NIO officials present (who had "winced" at some of Feeny's remarks) had interpreted the Agreement almost exclusively as a means of combatting the IRA.
- Nationalist defenders of the Agreement continue to derive considerable mileage from the potential for change which it represents (as opposed to its actual achievements to date). The often exaggerated expectations which people have about the Agreement help in this respect. Feeny

mentioned, as an example, the case of two constituents of his who turned up for work at the N.I. Electricity Service on the Loyalist 'day of action' and found themselves locked in and threatened by a hostile mob outside. They rang Feeney and asked him to ring "Dublin" about it. Feeney decided instead to contact the NIO, who in turn rang the Director of the NIES. The men got out safely in due course, thanks to a phone call made by the latter, but are convinced that their rescue was due to Dublin's intervention.

- We discussed the recent spate of sectarian assassinations in North Belfast. Feeney said that John Bingham, a prominent UVF commander from Ballysillan who has about a dozen men working for him, is believed by both local people and the RUC to have had a hand in the Scullion, Quinn and O'Neill murders. Bingham was also active on 3 March, burning cars in Ballysillan as early as 8 a.m. on the 'day of action'. A number of Bingham's associates are reportedly ex-British Army men who have placed their military expertise at the disposal of the UVF (a secretive organisation believed to be more attractive to people of a military disposition than the UDA).
- There are reports that the actual assassins of Martin Quinn were three men from Rathcoole and Newtownabbey, whom the police picked up but whom they subsequently released due to lack of evidence. One RUC source has told Feeney, however, that "we're certain that they did it". Regarding O'Neill, the RUC are suggesting that O'Neill may have brought trouble upon himself by visiting a UDA club shortly before his assassination. (Feeney, who regards this as most unlikely, is to check the matter further with O'Neill's father).
- We discussed also the recent "Today Tonight" special on paramilitary involvement in protection rackets in the North. Feeney worked closely with the makers of this

programme, which he thinks has considerably weakened the position of the Workers' Party (and, "by extension", the Provos). Some intimidation was experienced during the making of the programme, and Feeney has taken additional security precautions since it was transmitted. He is also concerned at possible retaliation against him for his assertion on another TV programme that two community centres in North Belfast (which he named) had been taken over by the Provos. (Feeney and the TV producer concerned are being sued by Fr. Des Wilson over this).

- In Feeney's view, Seamus Mallon was wrong to criticise the RUC for failing to protect the Garvaghy estate from the illegal Loyalist march through Portadown. He suspects that Mallon was "put up to it" by the two local Jesuits. Being a rural man, Mallon would have little understanding of the chaos which would have ensued if the police had tried to "take on" the Loyalists in the middle of the night in a built-up area. In view of the considerable logistical difficulties and the terrifying effect which a night-time operation of this kind would have had on all concerned, the RUC took, in Feeney's view, the only sane course. Feeney was pleased with the positive remarks made by McGrady, Hendron and, most of all, Hume about the RUC. The RUC's handling of Portadown went some distance towards dispelling the negative impressions created by their inaction on 3 March (a day which, according to King in an aside to Feeney recently, had been "fine in security terms but politically disastrous").
  
- We had a lengthy discussion of ways in which the RUC can be made acceptable to the nationalist community (Art. 7(c)). Feeney's views were fairly similar to those of Alex Attwood (my report on a conversation of 2 April refers). He saw little prospect of implementing the 'community policing' concept as long as the Provos were in a position to prevent the right kind of people from becoming involved. He was also sceptical about any prospect of policing in areas such as West Belfast with local recruits as the Provos would be

in a position to put pressure on the latter's families). Like Attwood, Feeney took the view that better community relations and an improved police complaints procedure represent the best hope of progress towards a more acceptable RUC. Under the former heading, he suggested that there are a lot of small things which can be done. This applied also to the Army. He did not think that it was necessary, for example, for the Army to have soldiers stationed on the tops of buildings such as Templar House and Divis Flats in order to guard the anti-sniper electronic monitoring equipment there. The presence of these soldiers is a permanent and oppressive reminder of 'British occupation', which the Provos have exploited to the full (at the cost of the inhabitants of the buildings concerned, whose lifts the Provos have destroyed in order to hamper the soldiers' movements). Greater sensitivity is called for in operations by the security forces which have a public dimension. Feeney added, however, that the way in which a community perceives the RUC or Army depends to a very great extent on the attitude of the individual RUC or Army commanding officer. Some are very reasonable and cooperative (e.g., the RUC's Deputy Divisional Commander in North Belfast at present) while others (e.g., the latter's boss, Cecil Moffatt) are distinctly unhelpful.

- Feeney raised also a specific security problem related to a new "interface" which has arisen in the Manor Street area of North Belfast. Though by rights Catholics could have expected to move into a new housing development in this area, in fact only fifteen houses to date have been allocated to Catholics. Furthermore, an interface wall was erected even before construction of these houses had begun, making it clear that all houses on the other side would be going to Protestants. Feelings have been running high in the area as a result and the Provos have naturally been exploiting the issue. Feeney sees potential for an outbreak of sectarian violence here in the near future.

- Finally, Feeney mentioned that the forthcoming address by Des O'Malley to the East Belfast branch of the SDLP had been conceived essentially as a fund-raising and recruitment exercise for the latter.

*David Donoghue*

David Donoghue

7 April 1986.

c.c. Taoiseach  
Minister  
Secretary  
Mr. Nally  
Mr. Ward  
Mr. Lillis  
A-I Section  
Ambassador London.

1379M