



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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*T. J. M.  
A good question  
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PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

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21 July 1988

Mr. Declan O'Donovan  
Counsellor  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs

*cl  
22/7*

Dear Declan

In the course of a conversation with Seamus Mallon in the Commons yesterday, one or two points of interest arose (with which you may already be familiar):

Marching Season

Mallon regards the present marching season as the quietest in a long time. He is genuinely amazed and has no explanation for it. In Markethill there has been no disturbance of any kind. He deliberately stayed at home during the Twelfth period in case of trouble but received not a single telephone call. Portadown went very well, as far as he is concerned. While he felt it was correct of the then Minister to complain publicly about the Garavaghy Road decision in 1986, he felt it was equally correct of the Tanaiste not to make an issue of this last year or this year. What counts politically is that an alternative to the Tunnel has been found (even if it is not an entirely satisfactory one). He was critical of the Jesuit priests in Portadown for continuing to stir up local feeling on the issue of the route in Portadown.

SDLP/Sinn Fein talks

Hume and Adams met alone on the eve of the Twelfth. Mallon implied that Hume saw advantage in developing a personal rapport with Adams and had therefore preferred the one-to-one approach on this occasion. Mallon has no strong feelings on this subject, though he would prefer if the talks were perceived as a matter between two parties, <sup>rather</sup> than between two individuals.

What he is more worried about is whether the SDLP can sustain these talks for much longer. With each IRA atrocity, it is becoming more difficult for the SDLP to sustain its credibility. (He added, in characteristic form,

X | that it is usually he, rather than Hume, who has to "face the music", i.e., face the pressure in Parliament or from the media after each atrocity). He also feels that the talks have at times been unduly abstract and philosophical (discussions about e.g. the "morality of the British presence") and that ordinary people will wonder why the SDLP needs so much time to put its views to Sinn Fein. Blunt, straight talking is needed. The kind of question he would like to put to Sinn Fein (but which he has not put so far) is: 'if you think that you can win the war, why are you sitting here with us?'.  
X |

To sum up, while he regards the exercise as entirely worthwhile, Mallon believes that it is not, after all, going to produce anything and has now reached the stage of wondering how much longer it should be pursued.

International Fund

Mallon indicated that he is very satisfied with the outcome of the representations he made recently to our side on this subject.

Yours sincerely

*David Donoghue*

David Donoghue  
Press and Information Officer