



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2018/28/2807
<b>Creation Dates:</b>	24 February 1988
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	5 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<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.



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

CONFIDENTIAL - BY COURIER SERVICE

17 Grosvenor Place  
SW1X 7HR

9/23

*cc to Comptroller AI  
✓*

24 February 11988

Dear Assistant Secretary

Dinner with Seamus Mallon MP, 24 February

1. I gave Mallon some steering points for tomorrow's N.I. Question Time in the Commons (based on briefing by <sup>D.</sup> O'Donovan earlier in the evening). He was already prepared on EPA material by Mr O'Donovan last Monday night. On the main point, Thain, it was suggested that he attempt to raise points of logic which would turn this episode to use in favour, particularly, of prisoners held at the Secretary of State's pleasure (SOSPs). Mallon had already got some material on this, smuggled out of prison in the handwritten equivalent of microfilm, and took the material offered with enthusiasm. He also took briefing on the prospects facing "life" prisoners under John Stanley (a date after 13-14 years) as opposed to their prospects under Nick Scott (a date after 10-11 years). I told him that Shane O'Doherty's review has been put back for another year. Mallon said that

- he had (with Hume and McGrady) raised this broad subject with John Stanley last Thursday. Stanley said that his basic criteria for review included the necessary time to serve a debt to society; the estimated prospects of the prisoners returning to violence, and the comments of the presiding judge at the trial. (Don't all the foregoing make a nonsense of the Thain decisions, he said).
- according to the "smuggled out" material, there are 2 SOSPs going into their 15th year and 5 going into their 14th year.

In his view, the foregoing makes a nonsense of the Thain case. To illustrate the Thain argument in the Commons, he is digging out facts concerning

- (i) a celebrated mercenary, Callon, sentenced in Northern Ireland by Judge Brown to 8 years for armed robbery; who, when released (over Brown's strenuous objections) went on to perpetrate atrocities in Angola where he was executed;
- (ii) a soldier who, following conviction for murder, was given early release and went on to commit further serious crime and was also involved in a popular TV series ("Eastenders"). Mallon thinks the latter point would give the example "legs" in the media in Britain.

2. Mallon believes that the mood at present inside Northern Ireland is the worst since Bloody Sunday, and that recent events will have a cathartic effect on nationalists. (I believe he meant that these events will purge from nationalists' minds the positive effects of the Agreement). In his view serious and traumatic events, such as those seen recently, provoke among the minority at ~~previously~~ <sup>progressively</sup> deepening levels of response: (i) a sophisticated political reaction at a personal level of judgement ("they know what things really mean"); (ii) a rehetorical reaction which leads to "getting it off your chest", and (iii) and most fundamentally, the "folk ~~adious~~ <sup>idiom</sup> factor", the "one that really matters". He believes that the majority of nationalists are extremely susceptible to the latter, perfectly exemplified by the killing of Aidan McAnespie: an innocent and well-liked boy going to a football match, gunned down by the English, his killing claimed as murder by a folksy Cardinal. (Mallon was here somewhat critical of the Cardinal's "heavy" performance). He felt that the net effect of the McAnespie killing was to "swing things away from us" (the SDLP). He said that a friend of his, an SDLP councillor was, at the wake, taken to the body by Aidan McAnespie's father who said: "there's your Anglo-Irish Agreement lying in there". Overall, Mallon said, he feels that this killing bears out in practise all the feelings and suspicions of people on the ground in that area of Northern Ireland at least.

3. Mallon said that there is an unwritten rule in places like Newry that "Sinn Fein tendency people" are to be harrassed: up to 4-5 times a day is not abnormal, involving the removal of outer clothing and shoes in any weather. He raised this with John Stanley, who said "please write to me about each and every case". Mallon said that he intends to do this, both directly and through the Conference.

4. Cloghogue. <sup>response ?</sup> Mallon said that the Agreement at high level to Minister Wilson's visit has had a very good effect. He had previously got no response from Northern Ireland Ministers on the point. Richard Needham has today asked if he could come to inspect the roads in the area. He will for sure inspect the problem of the school too, said Mallon. (We had previously discussed the ballistics relationship between the school and the British Army position.)

Kevin McNamara and Sean Hughes (Labour's junior Defence spokesman), whose mother is from Dundalk, have agreed to make a tour including Cloghogue. Mallon feels that, due to Minister Wilson's visit, he is "now making a strong point".

5. Mallon has been asked to make a presentation to Army officers heading for duty in Northern Ireland, "to explain the republican point of view". The suggested date is 12 July. He refused, and an alternative date was offered. He replied, saying that as he had had no apparent effect on British Army officers over the past 20 years, he did not feel that this exercise could have a positive effect, and he declined the invitation.

6. He suggested that McGrady be taken in hand and urged to take his Westminster <sup>discussion</sup> ~~discussions~~ seriously. McGrady did not attend for any of the recent very serious Irish debates and is, rather, beavering in his constituency. Mallon said that he or Hume could not easily take McGrady on, and it was agreed that the Embassy would tactfully try to suggest a rôle (with support as necessary in the form of material for interventions) for McGrady in the areas of fair employment, housing and environment. In Mallon's view, if McGrady does not achieve a profile in these "penalty kick" areas of policy at Westminster, his seat may well be in danger.

7. At a later stage, Mallon ranged into wider policy issues. He said that in his view questions like fair employment, and other good-looking areas of progress under the Agreement, do not at all measure up to progress on justice and confidence in the police. "Fair employment is no use where there is no employment." He does not expect, in any foreseeable circumstances, (he said "up to the middle of the next century"), Catholics being able to join an RUC which would be a community police force with broad community support:

"The whole thing has to be changed". I asked whether, in his view, there is very good and qualified material for suggestion under Article 6 to the various boards. Mallon replied, emphatically "No! Just as a Catholic cannot apply to Harland and Wolff for a qualified shipyard engineering job, because he has had no possible background", so the Catholics cannot qualify for senior posts relevant to the reform of the RUC. In response to further questioning, he too went further and said he believed that, even if there were qualified Catholics, they could not, if appointed, achieve the reform of the RUC.

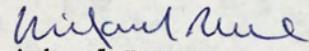
He made some overall points (condensing a lengthy conversation) that Dublin has hitherto concentrated on marginal requirements and, in the second three-year phase of the Agreement, must get down to "the meat". By this he means, he said

- that internal reform of the RUC, from the nationalists' view point, is not practicable;
- that regional responsibilities should be set out for police duties, four of these to cover the main nationalist areas and <sup>manned</sup>~~named~~ by police from the nationalist community;
- that the UDR would be disbanded (his premise includes a deal with the IRA although he acknowledged that hard elements would not be party to it);
- that this formalised and acceptable community policing, with a high acceptance level in each community, would further isolate those paramilitary elements still holding out against any settlement (he was here talking about a deal in which the wider IRA had accepted the new frameworks but an inevitable hard outer edge refused to come in).

8. Mallon's wide-ranging speculations did not, however, prevent him, when reminded, from gripping tenaciously at the real core of the Agreement as far as he and Northern Ireland nationalists are concerned: the Maryfield Secretariat, in his view, whatever about inter-Governmental difficulties which may inhibit its effectiveness, has a profound symbolic importance that

must not be thrown away. In summary, behind all the hard talking, he left the impression that he would be loath to see the Agreement being destroyed by present or future difficulties.

Yours sincerely



Richard Ryan

Minister-Counsellor