



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/47/123

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

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

AMBASÁID NA HÉIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

17, GROSVENOR PLACE,
SW1X 7HR

Telephone: 071-235 2171

TELEX: 916104

Fax: 071-245 6961

24 June 1993

A/Sec O hUiginn
Anglo Irish Division
HQ

Conversation with Seamus Mallon MP

Dear Assistant Secretary

I had a conversation on 23 June with Seamus Mallon who is in London for the debate this evening on renewal of direct rule, followed by the debate on Northern Ireland appropriations. For the record the following points arose in the course of our conversation.

He was downcast and impatient with the apparent lack of progress. He had no idea what he might say in the Commons debate on direct rule. What indeed could he say? He was tired of ritual phrases and of saying things for the sake of saying them. He was too long in politics for this type of thing. He was not going to stand up and start waffling on about a talks process that everyone knew to be dead and only awaiting a half decent burial. The onus was on the two governments and this indeed might be a point worth making in the Commons debate.

This line of thought led inevitably to the well trodden path of the need for closer consultation with the Irish Government. There had only been the one meeting with the Government and this was simply not good enough. He had failed to persuade Hume to organise a meeting. He was too taken up with his own agenda but something needed to be done to fill this vacuum which was in no ones interest.

This led him to tell me that he had been a guest speaker some days ago at a Fianna Fail meeting in Navan. He had, he said, upset the platform by criticising the Government for failing to make clear its position on Northern Ireland, something which it needed to do if it was ever to achieve its objectives vis a vis the British. He had gone on to put forward a very

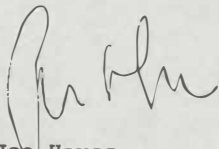
robust line on Arts 2 and 3 saying that there could be no question of their removal unless there were substantial gains implementing them. His remarks had apparently been very well received by the audience several of whom had urged him to take a similar message to other Fianna Fail gatherings.

He talked at some length about the Boundary Commission. He is unhappy with the way the SDLP are handling their submission on the redrawing of constituency boundaries. The SDLP group is composed of Denis Haughey, Alasdair McDonnell and a man called Carragher, whom I had not previously heard of. According to Seamus they have directed the SDLP submission toward retaining an SDLP seat in West Belfast. To do this they have extended the boundaries of the constituency and off set this against the concession of a neighbouring new constituency which would automatically go to the Unionists. If I understand his criticisms correctly he feels the SDLP submission opts for short term gains at the expense of a longer term strategy which could capitalise on favourable demographic trends. He believes that West Belfast should be redrawn but in a way which would include the big housing estates. The SDLP team will not countenance this because it would hand the seat to Sinn Fein. He had more time for the Unionist submission which is very modest and which proposes a new Newry and Mourne constituency which would hand him his seat in perpetuity. The Commission will publish its proposals later in the year and after that will accept written submissions.

He had the usual complaints about Hume. He had been trying all week to contact him so that they could agree a strategy for the debate on direct rule. He had failed to locate him and was unsure whether or not he would appear for the debate. He went on at length about Hume's insistence on continuing his dialogue with Gerry Adams. Mallon disapproves highly of this believing that Hume is today no nearer delivering "the hard men" than he was when the dialogue started several weeks ago. He may very well be getting somewhere with Gerry Adams, but Adams cannot deliver Sinn Fein or the IRA. As evidence of the ascendancy in Sinn Fein of those committed to violence Mallon pointed to the number of hard liners who had chosen to contest seats in the local elections and who had done surprisingly well.

I should mention finally that I detected some signs of a temporary strain in relations between himself and Eddie MacGrady whom Mallon complained had not been returning his calls.

Yours sincerely



Joe Hayes
Counsellor