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Confidential

Meeting with Seamus Mallon M.P.  
18 May 1994

T.A. O'Connell  
Amb. Loder  
Amb. W. Co.  
Joint Sec  
C.M.S. &  
Bot  
cc. 199-26

I met Seamus Mallon on 18 May, on the eve of the release by the British Government of its response to the Sinn Fein questions. The following were the main points to emerge:

- he was intensely angry that the IRA were continuing, and even extending, their campaign, while Sinn Fein continued to talk of "peace". He clearly finds this dual approach deeply offensive, and is determined to say so.
- he believes that the focus on the clarification issue in recent months has worked to the advantage of the Provisionals, and to the detriment of the SDLP. However, he thought, if the British were sensible, that Sinn Féin's decision to submit questions would back-fire on them. He was insistent that the clarification exercise be "closed down" as soon as the British replied to the list of questions.
- if, after the British response, the Provisionals again prevaricate and play for time he would, once the European elections were out of the way, speak out clearly against them on the issue.
- aside from concerns at the morality of the Sinn Fein position, he is also concerned at the impact on the SDLP at grass roots level. The constraint under which they have operated in dealing with Sinn Fein since the Hume/Adams process began has been bad for party morale. Supporters were declining to renew party membership, while it was proving difficult to motivate party workers for the European elections.
- he sees no prospect that Adams can deliver the IRA, and was clearly greatly exercised by continuing IRA attacks,

including that on the Anthony family. He said that, to his own astonishment, he found himself even tempted to consider whether further security measures might be required. (While more an indication of sense of outrage than of any operational significance, it does highlight his strength of feeling at present.)

- he had just come from a series of media interviews following the murder of Gavin McShane in Armagh earlier in the day. The recent upsurge in Loyalist killings in the area clearly added to his mood of pessimism. (He is also conscious of the implications of these attacks for his personal security).
- I briefed him on the follow-up to his report of Loyalist monitoring of HGS (building supplies) worker. He said that at RUC request, he was trying to contact the men to see if they would be willing to meet with the police (he feared that they might not). He added that an RUC source had told him that the RIR patrol, which had earlier stopped the van, should not have been in that area.

Talks

- he wants the two Governments to develop a detailed set of proposals and be prepared to implement them with or without the agreement of the local parties. He sees Strand 2 as the key to a wider package, on the basis that Strand 1 cannot be addressed meaningfully in the absence of a clear picture of what North/South structures will be in place. He views the specific proposal for a panel put forward by Hume in Strand 1 as unworkable.
- I briefed him in general terms on the progress of the Talks and the Government's commitment to the development of a new framework which met the objective needs of the situation. For his part he reiterated his well known views on the need for much closer coordination in the development of policy between the Government and the

SDLP.

- he felt the Taoiseach's participation in the recent meeting of the Body, following on the Tánaiste's contribution to the Cork plenary, had been extremely helpful and had evoked a very positive response from British members.

#### Crossmaglen

- earlier that day he led a delegation from Newry and Mourne DC to meet Mayhew on Crossmaglen. He said that Mayhew had been in a benign mood and the meeting had gone well. He secured a written commitment from the Secretary of State that the additional troops and security check-points would be removed when the work was finished. Mallon was grateful for the Tánaiste's intervention with Mayhew on this issue.
- Mayhew suggested the re-building might be completed up to 6 weeks ahead of schedule.
- Mallon and Fee had reluctantly attended last week-end's rally in the town, in which elements close to Sinn Fein were prominent. However he had made it clear that he would not take part in any further such events. He thought that since his meeting with the Tánaiste Provo influence in the area had peaked, and he felt that the situation locally had become more manageable.

#### Police Authority

- He had been at the receiving end of an impassioned presentation by a delegation from the Police Authority, led by its Vice-Chairman Joe Stewart. He had told them that unless he could be assured that the Authority would be in a position to deal effectively with situation like that in Crossmaglen, or the Paras in Coalisland, or re-routing of Orange marches, the SDLP line on policing would remain unchanged.

- he was pleased that Committee A of the Body, largely at his prompting, was taking up the issue of policing. He acknowledged however that care would be needed to ensure that the NIO did not use the exercise to give an impression of broad support for their own more limited proposals.

British Labour Party

- he expects Blair to be the next party leader, and having worked with him on recent criminal justice legislation thinks highly of him. However his preference would be for Gordon Browne, would he regards as a more solid and thoughtful individual. While not doubting Blair's goodwill, he fears that as Prime Minister his relative youth and lack of previous Government experience would make him, particularly on Irish issues, vulnerable to Whitehall pressures.
- he thought it likely that if Blair took over, Kevin McNamara's position would be in jeopardy (he mentioned Barry Sherman as a possible replacement).

Boundary Commission

- a barrister from Fermanagh, Dermot Fee, has been assigned to hear submissions on a group of constituencies, including Newry/Armagh on 27 June. Mallon thought significant revision of the original proposals unlikely.

P. Hennessy

18 May, 1994

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