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## Talk of release causes anguish

(Editorial, [Irish News](#))

The prospect of double murderer Stephen McClean being freed from prison will cause considerable apprehension and concern.

McClean and fellow prisoner Noel McCready were jailed for life for the gun attack on Damien Trainor and his close friend Philip Allen as they drank in a bar in Poyntzpass in March 1998.

The deaths of these young men – one a Catholic, the other a Protestant – caused widespread shock and revulsion.

Despite carrying out their crime only weeks before the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, these sectarian killers were eligible for release under the deal, a fact which caused understandable pain to the families of their victims.

It will be remembered that these men not only refused to show remorse for their evil deed but smirked and sniggered as they were convicted of this most heinous act.

However, while on pre-release parole, the killers were arrested in July 2000 and charged with a brutal attack on a Co Down man in a row over UVF flags.

They were subsequently acquitted but have remained in prison, their requests for release turned down.

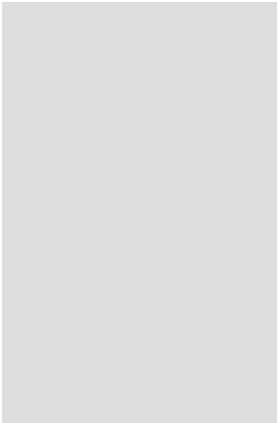
It has now emerged that the Sentence Review Commissioners are to recommend that McClean be freed from jail, subject to final approval from the secretary of state, Shaun Woodward.

This is extremely difficult news for the families. Damien Trainor's father has pointed out that McClean's home address is relatively close to Poyntzpass.

Fears have also been expressed about the likelihood that he has changed his violent ways. According to the last IMC report, the LVF is continuing to engage in criminality, including drug dealing and counterfeiting.

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If Mr Woodward grants McClean's freedom he must make clear what significant change has occurred and provide assurances to the families and the wider public that he no longer poses a risk.

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