

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



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SECRET

Meeting with Seamus Mallon, 23rd October 1985

I had lunch with Seamus Mallon in Northern Ireland yesterday. He was in a very relaxed humour. He said that his health problem, which is low blood pressure, continues to cause him difficulties in that from time to time he becomes very weak and has to go to bed. Among the points which Mr. Mallon made were the following:

- He plans to travel to the United States on 14th November and remain there for about a fortnight. The visit was originally planned for late October but was postponed because he thought an Anglo-Irish summit would be held then. He now wonders should he postpone it further.
- He stressed the importance of an all-Ireland nationalist forum and hoped that the Government would be in a position to respond to the ideas contained in the document which he had given them. He believes it important that such proposals should be put in place at the same time as an Anglo-Irish agreement.
- He has examined the list of areas with which he was provided some weeks ago. He now realises the extent of the work which will need to be done by the Irish Government side. He was not optimistic about the ability of the SDLP in its present state to significantly assist in the accumulation of factual material and of proposals which could be used in implementation of an agreement. He is however giving it his attention. I stressed the necessity to be up and running on all these issues immediately an agreement is in place.
- He had asked me before for details about what he terms the "logistics", that is the manner in which the Secretariat would work and the way in which the Agreement would be handled. He would be concerned that a sufficient number

of people be involved to enable matters to be dealt with thoroughly.

- He is somewhat concerned that the SDLP Conference may now be held at a time which could cause problems. He is as aware as anybody else of the British Parliamentary timetable and he thinks it most unlikely that an Anglo-Irish summit will be held before the SDLP Conference. This would cause difficulties for them.
- His assessment of the unionist and loyalist reaction to an Anglo-Irish agreement is not dissimilar to what others have been saying. He believes that they will probably emphasise their opposition in a legal and a political manner first. However he does feel that there may be loyalist assassination attempts on prominent members of the SDLP, including himself and on those people in Dublin who are believed to be involved in implementation of an agreement.
- He believes that the current attempt to reach agreement is very serious and that it is most important that there be a united nationalist approach to it. He is fearful that if it goes wrong constitutional nationalism in Northern Ireland will be destroyed.
- He is somewhat concerned about what Hume has in mind when he refers to an agreement helping to produce reconciliation. He suspects that he may have devolution in mind. Mallon does not believe devolution is a possibility because he thinks that the unionists will never accept power-sharing.
- Messrs. Merifield and McConnell from the Political Division of the Northern Ireland Office are coming to see him next Tuesday. The reason they gave is that they want to discuss the SDLP approach to the District Councils but he is certain that they want to tease him out on what his reaction will be to an Anglo-Irish agreement. He repeated

that he has not yet made up his mind and he has no intention of telling them anything.

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Daithi O Ceallaigh

24 October 1985

c.c. Taoiseach

Tanaiste

Minister

Minister for Justice

Attorney General

Messrs. Nally, Donlon, Ward, Dorr, Quigley, Lillis