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FROM: PS/SECRETARY OF STATE  
21 May 1997

524/97

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - O  
PS/Mr Murphy (B&L) - O  
PS/Mr Ingram (B&L) - O  
PS/PUS (B&L) - O  
PS/Sir David Fell - O  
Mr Thomas - O  
Mr Steele - O  
Mr Bell - O  
Mr Stephens - O  
Mr Leach - O  
Mr Ray - O  
Mr Watkins - O  
Mr Wood (B&L) - O  
Mr Brooker - O  
Mr Maccabe - O  
Mr Hill - O  
Mr Perry - O  
Mr Lavery - O  
Mr Warner - O

MA -  
22/5

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

SEAMUS MALLON MP

The Secretary of State met Seamus Mallon in her office in Stormont Castle last night for about an hour. I was also present. It was a very friendly and open meeting.

Robert Saulters

2. Mr Mallon said he had not spoken to John Hume about his (premature) claim that the head of the Orange Order would meet the Garvaghy Road Residents group. He suspected Mr Saulters was not experienced in media handling, that this was his first experience of 'Hume-Speak' and was simply a misunderstanding.

Local Elections

3. The fact that the Irish Government saw Sinn Fein last Saturday and the British Government were seeing them on local election day itself would have an effect on morale among SDLP workers. He expected they would lose out in Belfast and in mid-

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Ulster but in other areas would strengthen their position. He said Sinn Fein were past masters at "dropping the fly into the water" and the process of meeting officials should not drag on into a long series of meetings which would become an alternative layer of negotiations.

**Talks Process/Decommissioning**

4. Mr Mallon said we could not afford to have 3 June as simply a photocall but all sides needed to get into the talks again 'rock-hard'. The Irish Government would be fighting for their lives but it had been agreed that each delegation could speak for their party, or in this case Government, officials could carry on with the process. The Secretary of State said the Prime Minister was convinced that if there was no movement from Sinn Fein/IRA, the Government would leave them out and go ahead. However, the real test was how to get something on decommissioning.

5. Mr Mallon said there was no answer to decommissioning - doing it at the beginning or at the end were not viable options and therefore the Mitchell compromise was within the range of what was right to happen. He was very wary of any staging post approach to decommissioning because he was sure that neither the loyalists nor the IRA were going to hand over anything, but Mitchell had put the subject within the talks process and it had to be dealt with. The two Governments had to have a firm objective and Senator Mitchell should have a more pro-active role. This was not a criticism of Mitchell; structures were there, but the framework within which they had to operate was not workable. In the end, it came down to will - if the parties wanted to solve the problem of decommissioning then they would do so. The trick was to create political leverage so as to get decommissioning on a voluntary basis. Rather than set a test every so often, it was up to the two Governments to keep the lever going and create the situation where it is not in the parties interests not to respond.

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Policing

6. Asked by the Secretary of State about the SDLP idea of having four police forces, Mr Mallon denied that he ever wanted that. But unlike the Secretary of State, he said, he did want symbolic change - to Northern Ireland Police Service. Under the current name it was neither Ulster, nor Constabulary, yet it worked under the Northern Ireland Police Authority and was subject to the Northern Ireland Police Complaints Commission. He said that symbolism was very potent and would be a declaration of intent to everyone in Northern Ireland. His position was a neutral one and the fact of the political attachment to the RUC was part of the problem.

7. The Secretary of State said that the problem in the next number of months was to keep both communities on side and to give respect to both. Symbolism was important but in her view the political attachment did not change by changing the name. Mr Mallon argued that, if 'this place' was ever going to work it had to get its own sense of space. The term RUC was an anachronism and he could understand the emotional attachment to it, but the problem was the political attachment to it, which was wrong.

8. Mr Mallon accepted that the case for four police areas had been made but what they were trying to do in that was to get a sense of space for those areas - for instance, few, if any, young constables who served in South Armagh came from anywhere near the area, and that could be multiplied many times over throughout Northern Ireland. It would not be possible to get full allegiance to Northern Ireland in present circumstances but it may be possible on a smaller scale. This was no different than happened with the Education and Library and Health Boards. The SDLP position on policing was reasonable, he said, and if Sinn Fein came into the talks their position would be for total disbandment. It was therefore a matter of getting something that he could sell as a change, but yet accepting that an overall settlement would

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have to be agreed in the talks. A name change would be a big thing, although it would not affect the police performance or his own ability to work with the police because he did that every day of the week.

**Local Government**

9. Mr Mallon said that any changes to local Government prior to a settlement would be messy. The time to do something was when a settlement was arrived at, because, at that stage, local Government (composition and structures) could be fitted around the settlement, not as an alternative to an administration. The nature of changes to local Government would be self-evident when any settlement was reached. He thought that the unionists had the NIGC, Select Committee, the Forum and local Government and that was enough to bridge the democratic deficit for the present.

**Other Subjects**

10. Mr Mallon had a number of niggles - the ineffectiveness of many people serving on quangos; difficulties for the elderly or disabled in getting through the bureaucracy of the Housing Executive or dealing with Disability Living Allowance; and the need for more rational planning arrangements. Finally, the Secretary of State mentioned the Home Secretary's agreement to transfer McCotter and McNamee to Northern Ireland prisons. Mr Mallon thought that was a very good move.

*W K Lindsay*

W K LINDSAY  
Private Secretary

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