



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Confidential

Meeting with Mr. Frank McManus  
Enniskillen, 4 October 1989

Mr. McManus - ex. MP (Independent Nationalist) for Fermanagh South Tyrone - runs a busy law practice in Enniskillen. While no longer active in politics, he retains a keen interest in political developments and welcomes the ongoing contact with the Department.

UDR/security leaks

He shared the Government's deep concern about the UDR. He sympathised with the dilemma faced by the Government in seeking to move the British Government on the matter. "Agreeing to differ" on every difficult issue was not satisfactory, but on the other hand if the only ultimate sanction available was withdrawal from the Agreement, this was scarcely a desirable path either, he felt.

Turning to the RUC, he said that the recent allegations of an "Inner Circle" brought into focus again the shadowy and dangerous role played by elements within the RUC and in particular by its Special Branch, over the years. In a sense, the Special Branch, by virtue of their position and the resources they had at their disposal, posed an even more lethal threat to the nationalist community than the UDR. The basic *raison d'être* of the RUC, as exemplified by the Special Branch, was the defence of the interests of the Protestant/Unionist community and they would continue to use every means at their disposal to further that end, he believed. He was not sure whether the "Inner Circle" was precisely what it claimed to be, but he had no doubt that there was some substance to the claims. I asked how he saw this squaring with the RUC's generally improved handling of contentious issues such as the marching season. He replied that he saw the latter as the RUC "doing what they were ordered to do". He wondered what the position would have been had duty in, say, Portadown on 12 July been on a voluntary basis. He was extremely doubtful that more than a handful would have come forward on that basis.

The scale of the recent revelations has made him somewhat uneasy about his personal security. For the last year or so his car registration number appears to have been on the computerised list used by the security forces. As a result, each time he is stopped at a checkpoint he is asked detailed questions about the

car, how long he has had it etc. and the mileage is taken. He learned unofficially from a soldier at a checkpoint some time ago that the reason his car was on the list was because it "had been seen being driven by a Sinn Fein Councillor, Hugh O'Neill". Mr. McManus said that this allegation had no foundation. He had not made a particular issue of the matter until the McGinn killing and the subsequent developments. He now feels that he has some cause for concern and has taken the matter up with the RUC (without response to date). He asked me if the Department could also take the issue up in the Secretariat. I undertook to arrange this and to stay in touch with him on the matter.

### Prospects for political movement

Despite the shadow of the collusion controversy, he is cautiously optimistic about the prospects for political progress in the medium if not the short term. Neither community has cause for satisfaction with the present situation. Unionist frustration in the face of the Agreement was obvious and deep-seated and a powerful motivation for them to "do business" sooner or later. He identified Ian Paisley as the major stumbling block to that progress coming sooner rather than later. There was no doubting the meanness of people like Peter Robinson to break the stalemate. But the negative shadow of Paisley still seemed the most potent force.

On the nationalist side, the Agreement had undoubtedly alleviated the unevenness of the playing pitch. But the reality was that the major levers of power and influence - and, crucially, control of the security apparatus - continued largely in Unionist hands. While an improvement on their previous position, this was not a situation which nationalists could be happy about, Mr. McManus felt. He noted the Minister's UN renewal of the Taoiseach's invitation to the Unionists to enter dialogue and he had a strong sense that there would be major movement within the next few years. He believed, however, that the Unionist strategy would be to aim for an outcome which came as close as possible to the "ancien regime". It would be naive to believe that they had any interest in a "just and equitable solution".

Sinn Féin/IRA

Mr. McManus felt that it has been a very bad year for both Sinn Féin and the IRA. Both seem to have lost their way. The twin-track policy of the ballot box and the armalite looks more and more like the marriage of mutually exclusives that he personally always believed it was. He understands that the post-mortem within the movement on Sinn Féin's election performances this year has been particularly acrimonious. He feels that there must be considerable chagrin at the continued improvement in the position of the Workers Party in the South. He believes that Adams knows full well that as long as Sinn Féin are tied to the IRA they have no hope of that kind of progress here. He also believes that Adams is conscious that if the IRA's campaign continues Sinn Féin have no chance of being included in any political "shake-up" in Northern Ireland. This is a major dilemma for Adams. Mr. McManus said that it is being rumoured within Republican circles that, if reelected, Adams intends to take up his Westminster seat after the next election.

Mr. McManus also made the point that the main reason for Sinn Féin's poor performance in the local elections in Northern Ireland was that for the most part their Councillors had proved completely ineffective as grassroots politicians. He saw the poor vote as a reflection of this rather than any slippage in support for their policy on the "national question".

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