



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Confidential

A conversation with Seamus Mallon

The following are the main points of interest which arose in a conversation which I had with Seamus Mallon last night.

The talks process

- I briefed Mallon in general terms on the Minister's meeting with the Secretary of State this week.
- Hume had already contacted him about a possible meeting with the Secretary of State next Wednesday. Mallon is uncomfortable with the idea of Eddie McGrady and himself deputising for Hume at this meeting. He does not regard this as "a proper way of doing business" and feels that it ought to be possible for Hume to find an opportunity for a private meeting with Brooke.
- He is, however, ready to go ahead with it if necessary. He will simply ask the Secretary of State to seek clarification of the Unionist intentions in relation to the proposed Westminster meeting.
- He is unenthusiastic about the Westminster proposal. If it is simply a question of a meeting between the SDLP and the Unionists, he has no objection. Hume has made clear on many occasions the party's willingness to sit down with the Unionists at any time and in any place. If, on the other hand, the Secretary of State were present, this would give the meeting a more formal character and would put it squarely into the category of "talks about talks". The SDLP would then have to consider whether, by taking part in such a meeting, they would be lending themselves to what the Unionists could present as a renegotiation of the terms agreed on 26 March last. As far as Mallon is concerned, "we go on from where we left off last July".

- If it were possible to keep the proposed Westminster meeting at the level of an informal chat with the Secretary of State absent, Mallon could go along with this. He would not object to the Westminster location. He would, however, be opposed to the exclusion of the Alliance Party, which could be represented as an implicit acceptance by the SDLP of changes to the 26 March terms. It also occurred to him that, if the Unionists envisaged participation by "all parties represented at Westminster", they might well endeavour to bring along Jim Kilfedder (leader of the Progressive Unionist Party), thereby enhancing the Unionist team.
- Mallon has no particular difficulty with the Mawhinney proposal for a dinner involving the various parties at deputy leader level. Mawhinney mentioned this at a private dinner with Mallon several weeks ago but has not so far followed up with a proposed date. Mallon sees no threat to his party's position from his attendance at this dinner.
- In general terms, Mallon is suspicious of the Unionist manoeuvres to get talks underway before the election. Quite apart from the efforts they will undoubtedly make to unravel the package agreed earlier this year, they will see tactical advantage in renewing the talks process shortly before the election. An apparent SDLP reluctance to commit themselves in renewed Strand One talks would be heavily exploited by the Unionists in the hope of causing electoral damage to the SDLP. Mallon is, therefore, wary of a possible Unionist trap. On the other hand, he recognises that the SDLP must be seen to be positive and open-minded in relation to further talks.

The Cookstown killing

- Mallon is due to see the Secretary of State today along with Denis Haughey. They will press for an independent

inquiry carried out by a member of an outside police force.

- Mallon is irked by journalists suggesting to him that his concerns should have been laid to rest by the appointment of Fionnuala McGrady as the ICPC supervisor of the RUC's inquiry. He is firmly of the view that ICPC involvement, regardless of the supervisor chosen, is no answer to the serious confidence problems posed by this case. Privately, he disapproves of Fionnuala McGrady's decision to join the ICPC.

An "inner force" within the RUC

- Commenting on the allegations made by the Channel Four programme on Wednesday night, Mallon felt that there was "a ring of plausibility" about them. He recalled the Irish News claims in this respect two years ago and his own (unsuccessful) attempts to elicit information in Parliament. He also recalled that both businessmen and paramilitary figures were involved in the establishment of Ulster Resistance several years ago.
- As regards the individual murders on which the programme focussed, he is firmly convinced that there was a sinister RUC involvement in the Finucane and Cappagh killings. He also found the programme's indications of RUC involvement in the Marshall case compelling.

*David Donoghue*  
David Donoghue  
Anglo-Irish Division  
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