

2013 ANNUAL RELEASES

1983 and 1984 files – Highlights List

A full list of the files will be available

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
1983/84 Highlighted Files	5
Central Secretariat	5
Department of Economic Development	9
Department of Finance & Personnel.....	11
Department of Education	12
Department of Environment.....	13
Department of Health & Social Services	15
Northern Ireland Office	18

Introduction

The annual release of selected official files continues against a background of greater public access through the Freedom of Information Act balanced against the need to protect personal information. The FOI Act (2000) created a new access to information regime and all records were reviewed in accordance with both that Act and the Data Protection Act.

The files are being released under the 30/20 Year Rule.

Annually since 1976, official records held by PRONI which were 30 years old have been reviewed with a view to making them publicly available ("the 30 year rule). In September 2011, the Assembly accepted a Legislative Consent Motion to reduce the time limit for release from 30 years to 20 years ("the 20 year Rule"). This is underpinned by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the amendments made to it by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The 20 year rule is being phased in over 10 years, with two years worth of records being reviewed and released each year by PRONI and NI Departments. This is the first year of the phasing-in period; records of the NI Departments and the NIO with terminal dates of 1983 and 1984 have been brought forward for review and release in December 2013.

This involves the referral of the files to the Responsible Authority for sensitivity review. This entails a page by page examination to ensure that a record contains nothing sensitive as defined by the FOI Act and DP Act.

Records Released

1,047 files being deemed as suitable for release as "fully open". A further 366 files are open but subject to redaction or partial closure of some content.

The main file series being released includes Central Secretariat and Northern Ireland Office files.

Some of the main issues covered by the 1983-84 release include:

- The 1983 Maze escape
- Political developments
- Work of the NI Assembly

- Cold War era nuclear attack ('emergency survival') planning
- Child abuse allegations, the 1984 *Committee of Inquiry into Children's Homes and Hostels* (including Kincora, Rubane, and the repercussions from the Hughes and Sheridan Reports)
- Fluoridation of the water supply
- Issues concerning Travellers Camps
- Development schemes for areas of urgent need, such as Poleglass, Belfast
- Vietnamese refugees
- Security and policing
- Research into poverty and social deprivation
- Work to support victims of domestic abuse
- Alcoholic / solvent abuse and attempts to reduce the problem
- Anglo-Irish economic cooperation (including cross border industrial and tourism initiatives)
- Possible merger between the Ulster of University and Ulster Polytechnic
- Religious education in Secondary schools
- Irish speaking schools
- Approaches by Sinn Fein to UK Government, to gain access to prisoners
- Repercussions following the Special Category Status Hunger Strikes
- International Red Cross meetings regarding prisoners conditions
- Use of Irish Language / literature in NI Prisons
- 'Converted' prisoners (*Supergrass*)

Records may be closed either fully or in part only. Partial closure involves the removal of a limited number of papers from the file that have been deemed as exempt from the right to know under FOI. To facilitate the release of as much information as possible, redaction can be used to blank out sensitive data within individual documents that would otherwise prevent release. All information which is withheld in the manner outlined above, however, must be retained in accordance with the exemptions contained within the FOI Act. In the majority of cases, the reason for extended closure was the application of section 40 – the *personal information* exemption – of the FOI Act. This means that personal information is exempt from the right to know if it would breach the Data Protection principles.

1983/84 Highlighted Files

Central Secretariat

- CENT/1/11/14A 1982-1983 Kincora**
File details the work of the Committee of Inquiry into Children's Homes and Hostels
- CENT/1/11/56 1982-1983 Anglo-Irish Economic Co-operation – Kinsale – Gas Pipeline**
File details the ongoing debate about the supply of Irish gas to Northern Ireland.
- CENT/1/12/19 1983-1983 Political Developments – May 1983**
Detailed papers on the subject of Northern Ireland's future and constitution. Includes Secretary of State's visit to Dublin, including his rejection of allegations (apparently from an individual in the NI Housing Executive) that UK Government sought to 'seek to favour Sinn Fein.'
- CENT/1/12/2A 1983-1983 Political Developments – January 1983**
Detailed papers on the subject of Northern Ireland's future and constitution. Includes information on the opinion of various sections of Catholics in Northern Ireland society, and UK Government 'action against Sinn Fein.'
- CENT/1/12/24 1983-1983 Constitutional Developments – June 1983**
Detailed papers on the subject of Northern Ireland's future and constitution. Includes detailed overview of NI politics, and assessment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

- CENT/1/12/27A 1983-1983 Briefing Material for Incoming Secretary of State and Ministers – 1983**
Large file, holding detailed papers on the subject of Northern Ireland's future and constitution. Includes First Day Briefs for incoming Minister of State, on a wide variety of NI issues, from economy to security.
- CENT/1/12/31 1983-1983 Capital Punishment**
Brief document from Irish Ambassador to Secretary of State for NI James Prior, outlining Irish concerns at UK Government reconsideration of the Death Penalty.
- CENT/1/12/32 1983-1983 Approaches to Government by Sinn Fein [Members of Parliament and Assemblymen and Sinn Fein Offices]**
Refers to UK Government policy on communicating with various Sinn Fein members, at Westminster and in the media.
- CENT/1/12/33 1983-1983 Constitutional Developments – August 1983**
Detailed papers on the subject of Northern Ireland's future and constitution. Includes background on the 'Loyalist Ethos' and the 'Nationalist Aspiration'
- CENT/1/12/41 1983-1983 Father Brady Report**
Details the UK Government response to Father Brady's study on discrimination against Catholics, and shows that London largely rejected the report 'in view of its emotive language and scant statistical base...'

- CENT/1/12/51 1983-1983 Anglo-Irish Papers 1983/84**
Includes: a report from HM Ambassador to Dublin on his first impressions from the Republic of Ireland, 13 Dec. 1983; and papers relating to the Anglo-Irish summit in November 1983.
- CENT/1/13/35A 1983-1984 Sinn Fein – Contacts**
Contains detailed guidelines and protocols for UK Government receiving communication from Sinn Fein Members of Parliament or Assemblymen ('should be brief and formal, avoiding any appearances of friendliness...'). Includes correspondence between Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Jim Prior and Secretary of State Leon Brittan regarding Government attempts to prevent Gerry Adams visiting prisons in his capacity as an MP, and how to communicate with him ('there is some advantage in keeping replies to Mr Adams as brief and dismissive as possible..').
- CENT/1/13/31 1984-1984 Visits – Noraid Visitors to N.I. (Northern Ireland)**
Contains limited papers on the delegation led by Martin Galvin of Noraid, and UK Government views on the American supporters of Irish Republicanism.
- CENT/1/13/30A 1984-1984 Political Developments July 1984**
Detailed papers on the subject of Northern Ireland's future and constitution. Includes interesting restricted briefing papers on local politicians and 'Notes for Record', including one created by a UK Government official (written for the attention of the Secretary of State), gleaned after private discussions whilst travelling with John Hume between Heathrow and central London (same briefing document also includes the opinions of Martin Smyth and Ken Maginnis).

- CENT/1/13/23** **1984-1984** **Security Arrangements for Travellers Between G.B. (Great Britain) and N.I. (Northern Ireland)**
Contains comparative details of airport security in mid 1980s.
- CENT/1/13/16** **1983-1984** **Security: Review December 1983 / January 1984**
Covers detailed intelligence based briefings and reports on the overall security picture in Northern Ireland, and shows how UK Government was considering trying to further restrict Sinn Fein constitutional activities, taking legal action against Sinn Fein leadership, controlling the media and proscribing the organisation. Also details cross border security forces cooperation.
- CENT/1/13/50** **1984-1984** **Possible Changes in local government**
Comprises papers from senior officials looking at possible political developments in local government.
- CENT/1/13/51** **1984-1984** **Report Committee**
Contains papers relating to Assembly Devolution Report Committee, draft reports and notes of meetings of Committee members including Peter Robinson, Jim Allister with the Secretary of State, 7 August 1984

Department of Economic Development

- DED/6/24** **1977-1983** **BAN (Belfast Areas of Need) - Belfast. Areas of Special Social Need – Planning Team – Minutes of Meetings**
Relates to Lord Melchett's efforts to inject funds (£2 million, over 2 year period) into West Belfast, including Shankill, Whiterock and Divis.
- DED/6/25** **1981-1983** **Review of Higher Education in Northern Ireland (Chilver)**
Focuses on Chilver report, and on the political ramifications of the proposed merger between New University of Ulster and the polytechnic college
- DED/6/27** **1975-1983** **Republican Clubs**
Includes correspondence and minutes of meetings between Government and Republican Clubs, and the theory held by the latter that the 'Unionist Ministry of Development' and the NIHE had conspired to deprive Andersonstown area of jobs.
- DED/6/28** **1976-1983** **West Belfast – General**
Issues relating to Government attempts to boost the area with new factories, including the development of Kennedy Way.
- DED/6/31** **1980-1983** **Contact with SDLP**
Criticism of British economic policy in Northern Ireland, and the issue of poverty (which SDLP suggested might be alleviated by closed links to Dublin).

DED/8/4

1983-1984 Tourism Development Plan – 'Northern Ireland Tourism': A Discussion Paper
Shows a dramatic fall in tourist visitor numbers during the height of the Troubles, with nearly no tourist coming between the years 1972-1977.

Department of Finance & Personnel

- DFP/16/2A** **1984** **Low Flying Activity by Army Helicopters in Crossmaglen**
Includes written complaint (from a senior Westminster politician's relative) about the damage caused by military helicopters using evasive manoeuvres whilst entering and exiting the area.
- DFP/3/1/38** **1983-1983** **FEA (Fair Employment Agency)**
Relates to the issue of the community and religious divide, and associated split between the middle class. A 'brain drain' of educated young adults was evidently damaging the employment market.
- DFP/3/1/42** **1983** **Black Implementation DHSS Papers**
Includes statistics on training school populations, and the issue of Custodial Units for difficult adolescents (which had a unique dimension in Northern Ireland due to the Conflict)
- DFP/3/2/9** **1982-1983** **Ban: Evaluation Project**
Projects to improve inner city economic prospects.
- FIN/18/62/59** **1982-1983** **European Community – 10th Anniversary of UK Accession**
Widely covered in the press at the time, the Irish Taoiseach had been invited by the EEC representatives to dinner at Queen's University Belfast, without first contacting the NI Government. Includes speeches

Department of Education

- ED/13/2/667** **1979-1983** **Community Education Policy**
File examines the issue of community education, which was seen by some as controversial. St Louises Community School is on notable case study.
- ED/13/2/811** **1984** **Gaelic speaking schools**
File includes a comparison with the Welsh Language Act 1967 and charts the establishment of Irish language schools such as that at Steelstown Primary School.

Department of Environment

- ENV/13/1/37** **1980-1983** **Belfast Airport Development Programme Vol.12**
Follows the progress towards Aldergrove airport attaining 'International airport' status.
- ENV/13/1/38** **1973-1984** **Cross Border Railway Relations Between NIR & CIE Including Customs Matters**
File shows Government attempts to stimulate cross border passenger and freight traffic, supported by EEC money.
- ENV/24/10A** **1975-1983** **Gipsies' – Nuisances & Complaints**
File detailing complaints from local communities living in proximity to areas occupied by Travelling People
- ENV/24/15** **1983-1984** **Briefing Material for Minister on Radioactive Matters (Including Sellafield)**
File details issues and concerns raised regarding the nuclear power station at Sellafield and the pollution of the Irish Sea.
- ENV/8/1/160** **1981-1984** **Emergency Housing Contingency Plans in Event of Major Emergency (War Planning) Vol.2**
File illustrates UK Government plans to supply emergency housing to those survivors of any direct Soviet nuclear attack on Northern Ireland.

ENV/8/1/161

1984-1984 Meetings of Joint Working Group on Homelessness

File addresses Government attempts to identify and assist the various categories of homeless in Northern Ireland, including those left in dire circumstances by unemployment, mental illness, abuse in the home or alcoholism, etc.

Department of Health & Social Services

- HSS/13/36/63 1979-1984 Vietnamese Refugees in Northern Ireland**
File covers the settlement, employment and social services requirements for those seeking refugee status as a result of the Vietnam War. Also charts the UK Government attempts to alleviate the impact on an already stretched employment system in locations like Craigavon, where poor employment led to local community tensions in 1979. By 1984, things had improved noticeably
- HSS/13/36/66 1979-1984 Fluoridation of Water Supplies in Northern Ireland – General Policy**
File shows the problems faced by major water companies in attempting to introduce fluoride to water supply, and Government efforts to back the companies with legislation.
- HSS/13/36/71A 1979-1984 Community Health – Infant Mortality – Policy**
File shows that Northern Ireland had the highest level of socio economic disadvantage in the UK, with a higher incidence of some forms of inborn handicap such as spinabifida. Other factors attributed to this poor record include a larger than average family size. However, it was noted that the infant mortality rate had dropped in NI by the early 1980s.
- HSS/13/37/60 1980-1983 C.C.O.S.P. – Sub Group on Joyriding – Children**
The file shows how Government and local community groups tried to address the problem, noting that joyriding was not a new phenomenon, but one which was much more dangerous in the early 1980s due to the eagerness of local West Belfast teenagers to engage in ‘VCP evasion’, in which a stolen

car would be driven towards Security Forces 'Vehicle Check Points', in order to initiate a high speed chase with army or police.

HSS/13/37/64 1977-1984 Social Services Branch – Battered Wives – General Policy

File shows the pressure placed on the refuges to accommodate growing numbers of women assaulted by their spouses. These refuges had a very limited number of beds. The file also compares instances of battered wives against those for assaulted / abused children, mentally ill and the elderly (often with dementia) in NI society.

HSS/13/37/65A 1979-1984 Ulster Defence Regiment

Charts the attempts to address the clear disparity between the social services / unemployment benefits available to various branches of the 'part time' security forces, such as RUC Reserve, Territorial Army, and the Ulster Defence Regiment.

HSS/13/37/66A 1980-1984 Child abuse – General Policy

File shows the clear lack of medical and psychological expertise (in the area of identification of signs of child abuse) available in NI at the time, and focuses on the training of specialist staff.

HSS/13/38/41 1981-1983 Mental Handicap Branch – Corporal Punishment in Schools for the Mentally Handicapped

File shows the UK Government work on the issue, and in particular on the illegality of corporal punishment under the European Convention of Human Rights, Article 3.

HSS/32/1/15/10A 1979-1983 Baton Round Casualties

File gives overview and statistics for plastic and rubber bullet injuries and fatalities.

HSS/32/1/15/11A 1979-1984 Security at Hospitals

Includes a collection of documents concerning complaints by Reverend Martin Smyth and Peter Robinson about the presence of Sinn Fein representatives at the Royal Victoria Hospital following the shooting of Gerry Adams by Loyalists.

HSS/32/1/19/3A 1982-1983 War Defence Planning

Contains detailed extracts from the 'UK Departmental War Book. File focuses on the emergency home defence exercise 'Spare Wheel,' which portrayed a hypothetical scenario in which Northern Ireland is attacked by Soviet nuclear weapons. The file covers the predicted deterioration in international relations between East and West, the transition to 'conventional war,' followed by sudden Soviet nuclear attack on high priority targets. Although Belfast shipyards were obviously on a likely list of industrial targets for the Soviet Union, the file contains a map showing Hillsborough Co. Down to be the hypothetical 'Ground Burst' attack by one nuclear warhead. The file details how Northern Ireland's local government and emergency services would try to remain functional in the 'Immediate Survival Period' and 'Reconstruction Period' after a global nuclear war.

Northern Ireland Office

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| NIO/12/315 | 1983 | <i>Prisons – SDLP</i>
File contains a detailed positional paper on UK Government relations with SDLP, and includes the comment that London should try to encourage the perception that SDLP is a ‘responsible party who does business with governments and whose voice is influential ...’ |
| NIO/12/327 | 1982-1983 | <i>Prisons – Reports – Annual Report on the Administration of the Prison Service for 1981 (Papers for the year 1982)</i>
Includes photographs of disturbances at Crumlin Road Goal (HMP Belfast), and an unexplained spectral image! |

- NIO/12/343A** **1984** ***Prisons – Protest – 'End of the Loyalist Protest – The Way Forward'***
File details the NIO position 'non conformist' prisoners, and on the whole subject of enforced integration of loyalist and republican prisoners at HMP Maze.
- NIO/12/364A** **1984** ***Prisons – General – Prisoners Correspondence. Censorship of Letters, Periodicals and Other Published Material***
File examines the issue of vetting and censorship of letters written by prisoners to families, colleagues and others outside the prison walls. Illustrates the clash (in Prison Authority view), between the individual's right to privacy, versus the prison authority's duty to restrict (where possible) any paramilitary influence, and command and control structures, which extended beyond the prison walls.
- NIO/12/367** **1984** ***Prisons – Funerals – Ministerial Attendance at Funerals***
Covers the arrangements for Ministers to attend the funerals of those security forces, prison staff or members of the Judiciary killed during the conflict.
- NIO/12/370** **1980-1984** ***Prisons – Regimes – Derogation from Human Rights Obligations***
File covers in great detail the UK Government attempts to file a notice of derogation from its responsibilities under both the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights (ECHR), due to its Emergency Powers Act and the ongoing conflict. In regard to the UN's scrutiny of UK human rights record, it was stated by a UK Government official that 'we (UK Government) are in bad company: only Chile, Uruguay and Colombia

have extant notices of derogation from CCPR and Poland (the only Eastern bloc state to derogate) withdrew its notice when martial law was lifted ... the existence of the notices of derogation undermines our case that human rights are not being breached in Northern Ireland ...'

- NIO/12/372A** **1980-1984** **Prisons – E.E.C. European Commission of Human Rights – Maze Case – Consideration of Article 13 Complaints**
File details the consideration of the European Commission of Human Rights case brought regarding the prisoners at HMP Maze, in regard to their status and conditions at the prison.
- NIO/12/514A** **1983-1984** **Prisons: Escapes. Escape from H.M. Prison Maze, Correspondence**
Correspondence on the 1983 Maze breakout.