



Department of
**Culture, Arts
and Leisure**

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Release of 1988 files at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland



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PRONI ON CAIN

PRONI on CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) is a joint project between the Ulster University and PRONI which has resulted in digitised images of key documents from previous PRONI file releases being made freely available to view online for researchers and students. For further details of the documents available, please visit

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/proni/index.html>



Introduction

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

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.

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. This year, the records of NI Departments and the NIO with terminal dates of 1987 were released during August 2015 and the records of 1988 are being brought forward for release during December 2015.

This process 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

464 files being deemed as suitable for release as “fully open”. A further **156** files are open but subject to blanking out of some content. **91** files remain closed in full, the bulk of which are individual prisoner files.

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

Some of the main issues covered by the 1988 release include:

- Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council (A.I.I.C)
- Meetings with NI political parties and other groups
- Economic cooperation and negotiations (involving Ireland, UK, USA and Europe)
- The MacBride Principles (on discrimination in the workplace)
- High level and operational security matters (including on the border and within the penal system)
- Child abuse (repercussions resulting from investigations and Public Inquiry)
- Pollution
- United Nations *Convention Against Torture*
- The Travelling Community
- Soviet Union – interest in the NI prison system
- Black Taxi operations
- Psychopathic patients – NI Mental Health legislation
- Paramilitary financing
- Homelessness
- Women and rape
- Community relations

Records may be closed either fully or in part only. Blanking out 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.

The catalogue of files for 1988 will be publicly available online on PRONI website, and files will be available to view at PRONI from **Wednesday 30th December 2015**.



1988 Highlighted Files

Central Secretariat

CENT/1/13/44	1984-1988	Harland & Wolff As detailed in the 1987 file release, this file concerns the ongoing and protracted negotiations over H&W and UK Shipbuilders contracts, specifically focussing on key military and major oil drilling ship contracts.
CENT/1/14/24	1985-1988	A.I.I.C. (Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council) - Official Co-ordinating Committee File contains detailed reporting on the work of the AIIC, outlining areas which are either to be reviewed or which were deemed to be completed (notably in the educational and cultural fields). Some matters had been agreed, implemented or were close to consensus, whereas other issues continued to vex the two Governments, such as RTE right to broadcast in NI and Customs and Excise (Duty Free allowances).
CENT/1/15/46	1986-1988	Sinn Fein: Possible Creation Of New Offence File details the Government consideration of Sinn Fein's political position (following their inclusion after being 'deproscribed' as the Government termed it, along with UVF in May 1974). Papers outline the Government concerns at the Sinn Fein position, their desire to extract some degree of condemnation of violence by Sinn Fein at election set against the issue of freedom of speech, and the unique local government problems faced in Northern Ireland with Unionists and Republicans being elected onto the same District Councils.
CENT/1/15/52	1985-1986	Paper for Anglo-Irish Conference: Pollution Papers detail the AIIC concern for pollution of the Irish Sea and inland waterways, including the dumping of toxic waste, agricultural waste and adverse effects on Irish fishing industry.

CENT/1/16/17	1986-1988	West Belfast File details Government attempts to address the problems faced in the economically West Belfast, in areas where paramilitary influence is strong, such as Shankill and Falls. 'If the hold of Sinn Fein is to be reduced, Government must be perceived as being able to make greater progress in tackling West Belfast's problems.'
CENT/1/16/18	1987-1988	Regional Problems Of Ireland – Hume Report John Hume's report looking at regional development across Ireland (urging decentralisation of government from Dublin).
CENT/1/17/21	1987-1988	Visit by Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy (Democrat Massachusetts) 5-8 April 1988 File details discussions from December 1987 between Secretary of State, Tom King and US Congressman Joe Kennedy following their initial meeting at a Friends of Ireland dinner, where issues of concern in NI were raised by the Congressman. These issues included religious equality and the elimination of discrimination in the NI workplace, the use of Diplock Courts, the number of High Court judges who were Roman Catholic, the use of lethal force by security forces, and the deaths on Gibraltar, the Milltown Cemetery shootings and the deaths of two Army Corporals in Andersonstown. Also, Kennedy suggested the urgent proscription of the Ulster Defence Association (by this stage, the UK Government had yet to be convinced of the merit in making membership of the UDA illegal). Of note, the Government stated in part of its overall response to Kennedy that 'there is no evidence to link Stone or the Milltown incident with the UDA...' (Michael Stone committed the Milltown Cemetery shootings)

CENT/1/17/25	1988	Anglo-Irish Conference – Meetings of Conference and PUS's Steering Group – Vol.9 File contains detailed strategic papers on the meetings of the AICC, considering a diverse array of issues of concern. To name but a few topics from one AICC meeting, this changing and comprehensive list included: the sale of Hong Kong Royal Navy vessels to Dublin (with a proviso that the vessels were not to be used off NI shores), a new Criminal Justice Bill, extradition of those suspected of paramilitary offences, arming of UK helicopters, the ROI / England football match at Stuttgart, an independent review of the 'Birmingham Six' and 'Guildford Four' cases, legal issues surrounding the seizure of terrorist assets and the Stalker Sampson ('Shoot to Kill') Inquiry.
CENT/1/17/28	1988	Northern Ireland in the United States Vol.1 (Dougherty Visit) File details high level meetings held with prominent US businessmen (led by Charlie Dougherty) to examine significant initiatives, including Harland and Wolff, Shorts PLC and Laganside Development. One key issue was the attempt by the Embassy and FCO to have in place political lobbyists in US for Northern Ireland industrial interests, but also to increase the information flow about potential US business development opportunities in Northern Ireland, set against what Government officials called the 'sentimental nationalism of the mainstream Irish-American Community...an audience which is not predisposed to receiving positive messages about Northern Ireland...'
CENT/1/17/30	1987-1988	Community Relations Policy File details Government draft policy (and ministerial speeches) on the issues facing both traditions in NI. The policy primarily proposed local community councils and a duty on District Councils to promote community relations.

CENT/1/17/38A	1988-1988	Political Developments – January File contains a range of papers relating to political development, including: analysis of developments in NI since December 1987, covering ‘talks about talks’, position of the Unionist parties, the SDLP, Alliance and Sinn Fein, the murder of John McMichael and reflections on developments during 1987 as a whole, compiled by Political Affairs Division, dated 4 January 1988; paper on Unionist reaction to the meeting between John Hume and Gerry Adams, 12 January 1988; SDLP reaction to the Hume/Adams meeting, 15 January 1988; paper entitled ‘Government policy towards Sinn Fein’, 26 January 1988; minutes of meetings of the Political Development Group; Note of Secretary of State’s meeting with Church leaders on 21 March 1988; note of a meeting with Ulster Unionist representatives including Chris and Michael McGimpsey, who advocated devolved power-sharing as the only solution in NI, 29 April 1988; political analysis of developments, dated 29 April 1988, reflecting on a speech by Peter Robinson, the ongoing Hume/Adams talks, and Sinn Fein; a paper about the election of a new Lord Mayor of Belfast, Nigel Dodds, dated 6 May 1988; NI Quarterly Assessment for January to March 1988, covering political developments, extradition, the USA, security making reference to Gibraltar and Milltown cemetery, Stalker/Sampson and economic and social issues, dated 3 May 1988
CENT/3/21A	1984	Political Developments (January – April 1984) File contains minutes of meetings of the Political Development Group; notes of meetings with Political Parties and party leaders; and papers on the future of the Assembly.
CENT/3/22A	1984	Political Developments (Nov – Dec 1984) File contains note of meetings with NI political party leaders and other representatives and meetings with NI Church leaders; and a note of a meeting between the Secretary of State and Charles Price, US Ambassador to the UK, referring to the conversation he had with President Reagan about the Brighton bomb, dated 6 November 1984.

CENT/3/48A	1985	Police Matters	<p>File contains papers relating to the Police Authority and appointments to it, briefings on parades and marches for the Secretary of State's meeting Ulster Unionist MPs, dated 26 June 1985; notes of meetings; briefings; letter from Lord Hailsham to William Whitelaw, about a public order review commenting 'I wonder whether racially inflammatory material includes the Old and New Testament,' dated 25 February 1985; papers about police complaints and a new RUC training centre; and a note about points made by Peter Robinson and William McCrea to the Secretary of State in relation to security and the concerns of farmers, dated 21 June 1985.</p>
CENT/3/50	1982-1986	Possible Army Training Areas	<p>File refers to the MOD request to occupy areas of high land in Northern Ireland for army live fire and other training purposes. Certain areas were already designated Areas of Scientific Interest, such as Slemish Mountain and Shaw's Hill and therefore conflicted with the mutual interests of the Environmental Conservation, Wildlife and Rambling lobbies would strongly oppose such occupation. Also, the other key stakeholder was the local farming community, who had clear concerns about the loss of high grazing pastures.</p>
CENT/3/58A	1987-1988	Intergovernmental Conference	<p>File contains papers prepared for meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental conference, including: a note of the special meeting covering the Remembrance Day bomb at Enniskillen and the Eksund Arms shipment, dated 16 November 1987.</p>
CENT/3/61 A	1987-1988	Miscellaneous NIO matters	<p>File contains briefings and correspondence, including: a letter about the introduction of a ministerial electronic mail network, 5 June 1987; and a paper about a Soviet Nuclear-powered satellite, Cosmos 1900, and arrangements to deal '...with the</p>

emergency situation which could arise if the...satellite fell on the Province,' dated 25 October 1988.

CENT/3/89A 1987-1988 Irish Identity (including Irish Language)

File contains papers about the use of the Irish Language in official business, and a copy of the SDLP Irish Language policy and a critique of it, dated 22 July 1987.

CENT/3/90 1988-1988 Industrial Development Matters

Contains highly detailed government discussions on the support given to local industry at a time of great uncertainty in the local economy (hindered by ongoing political violence), and how to encourage the key industrial output areas (like Mackies, Shorts and Harland & Wolff) without resorting to closure or a dependency on solely Government sourced funding.

CENT/3/92 1985-1988 NI Economy

File contains detailed appraisal of the current NI economic situation. Government conclusions were grim – 'very bleak economic prospects', 'severely damaged manufacturing base' (80% publicly owned or supported by IDB), 'poor job promotion forecasts', a 'national upturn not reflected in NI' and a 'need for a radical rethink' regarding the position of many companies.

CENT/3/95 1987-1988 Enforcement in the Public Sector

File details Government examination of equality in the workplace, in light of the requirement for employers to register with the new Fair Employment Commission and illustrates particular problems such as enforcement of equality in sensitive employment areas.



Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

HSS/13/45/38 1987-1988 Aids – Ad Hoc Committee in Northern Ireland

File covers the government health response to the growing AIDS crisis and attitudes in Northern Ireland communities to sexuality, awareness of sexually transmitted disease and general sexual health, especially among young people.

HSS/13/45/62A 1988-1988 Child Abuse Review Group

File contains detailed papers from Government and also interested consulted parties (such as Womens' Aid Federation and Barnardos) covering the scrutiny of procedure / protocol, post-Hughes Inquiry. Includes examination of inter agency cooperation and communication, the rape and abuse reporting system in schools (and also in other circumstances), the vetting by employers of staff in care positions and the question of whether child abuse should include the related issue of child neglect.



Northern Ireland Office

NIO/12/613	1980-1988	Prisons – United Nations Convention against torture File contains detailed papers on the Government response to the United Nations Human Rights Commission's draft 'Convention Against Torture. Various aspects of security in northern Ireland are raised in the consultations, such as use of baton rounds by security forces, interrogation of suspects, extradition, the legality of the use of lethal force by security forces ('Shoot to Kill' investigations), the use of force with regard to prisoners (in recapture, restraint, forced feeding, protecting them from self harm, preventing escape, etc.). UK Government, whilst not opposing the signing of the Convention, clearly had reservations about some 'undesirable features of the Convention...'
NIO/12/634	1983-1988	Prisons - Irish language in H.M. Prisons In light of the major 'cultural / identity' strand which was included in the Anglo Irish Agreement (and the workload of the AIIIC), this file focuses on the inclusion of Irish language and culture in NI prisons. This includes various key issues, including the legal arguments surrounding the playing of Gaelic football in prison, teaching prison staff basic Irish, the use of Irish in personal names and addresses, translation of confiscated prisoner correspondence from Irish, and the reaffirmation of the support for 'lesser used' languages by the European Parliament.
NIO/12/646	1988	Prisons - Soviet Union interest in NI prisoners File concerns the enquiry from Moscow, as part of an exchange between UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Douglas Hurd and Eduard Shevardnadze (Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs), concerning the status of 400 'political prisoners' in Northern Ireland. Shevardnadze had handed over a list of human rights cases which his government was

concerned about, in relation to the Helsinki process (Committees for Human Rights). Hurd obviously refuted the Soviet allegations that UK was somehow ignoring or abusing individual prisoners' human rights.

NIO/25/1/91 1986-1988 Solvent abuse and teenage drinking

File details the government response to the gradual change in abuse habits, from alcohol and solvent to the increasing availability of illegal drugs. Also acknowledges the need to fund police counter drugs units, whilst simultaneously supporting the ongoing counter paramilitary duties

NIO/25/1/92 1986-1988 Anglo-Irish Agreement – General policy matters

File contains detailed papers on the various key issues facing the AICC, including joint RUC / UK Army patrolling, prisons, electoral matters, employment equality, Stalker Sampson (the 'Shoot to Kill investigation), economic cooperation and parades and marches.

NIO/28/2/7 1986-1987 Civil Emergencies – Monitoring of Radiation – Chernobyl Accident April 1986.

File contains the post event analysis of the disaster in Ukraine and focuses on several key systematic shortcomings and failures (in radioactive accident / pollution early warning system not only in Northern Ireland, but in UK as a whole).

