



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

PRONI

Release of 1989 files at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
1989 Highlighted Files	6
Central Secretariat	6
Department of Economic Development	13
Department of Education.....	14
Department of the Environment.....	15
Department of Finance and Personnel	17
Department of Health and Social Services	19
Northern Ireland Office	21

Copyright

Most public records in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland are subject to Crown Copyright. Crown copyright information previously available for re-use under waiver conditions can now be re-used under the terms of the Open Government Licence. The Open Government Licence was introduced in 2010 as a simpler set of terms and conditions for the re-use of a wide range of information covered by Crown Copyright. For further details of information covered by the licence, please see What the Open Government Licence covers at:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/government-licensing/whatogl-covers.htm>

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 1989 are being released during August 2016 and the records of 1990 will be being brought forward for release during December 2016.

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

503 files being deemed as suitable for release as “fully open”. A further **151** files are open but subject to blanking out of some content. **78** 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 1989 release include:

- Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council (A.I.I.C)
- Political Development meetings
- European Convention on Human Rights
- 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 (including 'Kincora' Inquiry , Sheridan and Hughes reports)
- Community groups and political links
- Racketeering
- Emergency / contingency / disaster planning (including 'War Plan')
- Post Chernobyl accident contingency planning
- The Arts (including funding for Ulster Orchestra and Ulster Museum)
- Fisheries
- The Lagan Weir project

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.

1989 Highlighted Files

Central Secretariat

CENT/1/15/17A	1985-1989	LA (Irish Language Daily Newspaper) File deals with requests for the Secretary of State to consider funding grants (via LEDU) to the Irish newspaper <i>LA</i> . The Department of the Gaeltacht for the Irish Government had already refused similar funding and UK officials were examining the eventual geographic location of the newspaper, in terms of ongoing concerns over the Conway Mill complex (and alleged paramilitary links).
CENT/1/15/53A	1984-1986	Conway Street Mill File contains Government papers on the decision to refuse to pay statutory grants to the Conway Mill Education Centre and Conway Community Group, and to withdraw from a legal contract with the Conway Street Women's' Self Help Group due to alleged Republican links. In a memo dating May 1985, Ken Bloomfield (Head of Civil Service) noted: 'Unionist politicians will no doubt welcome the statement (SoS) at least insofar as it applies (as it will in the first instance) to republican groups...In many respects we are entering uncharted waters...we might only provide fuel for Unionist politicians to argue that any group with Sinn Fein members should be debarred from receiving grant and thus accentuate the controversy over proscription...could also reopen (to our disadvantage) more important issues of paramilitary finance such as the black taxi operation, construction industry fraud and drinking clubs...'

CENT/1/17/39A	1984-1988	Sinn Fein - Action against Illegalities – (1) Illegal Occupation of N.I.H.E. Properties. (2) Lack of Planning Permission
		<p>File details Government investigation of illegal occupation of Housing Executive properties by Sinn Fein.</p>
		<p>‘The scope for boosting legitimate alternatives to Sinn Fein in the advice and community support areas has been reviewed. The clear conclusion which emerges is that while increased support (to communities) could well be useful and justified in its own right...it does not hold out much prospect of replacing the Sinn Fein activities. The main reasons for this are the almost limitless scope for welfare rights work and the skill and efficiency with which the Sinn Fein activities are conducted...’</p>
CENT/1/18/24A	1989-1989	Public Appointment – District Council Representation
		<p>File includes the detailed assessments of the Government’s <i>Political Development Group (PDG)</i>, with regard to the political situation in district councils and public bodies.</p>
		<p>One of the most significant challenges for Government in this respect was ensuring that the public sector in Northern Ireland represented everybody and what measures needed to be taken to redress imbalance officials noted that the public sector ‘should be so constituted as to enjoy the widest possible respect and acceptance throughout the community...’</p>
		<p>The problem was exacerbated by ongoing political protests by Unionists refusing to take their</p>

nominated positions on various bodies (including Education and Library Boards), whose actions in the opinion of the PDG, 'may oblige Government to nominate other councillors to take their place...'

In correspondence from June 1989, Robin Masefield wrote to R. Spence: 'the issue of perceptions is important here. You are right to say that our view is not fully shared by the SDLP and the Irish. Nor I believe, will it be, – legislation notwithstanding-until we take some risks and appoint 'difficult' individuals to key bodies to demonstrate our commitment fully...'

CENT/1/18/45A 1984-1989

Shorts Bros

File includes high level Ministerial correspondence and briefings on defence procurement, in particular the Government's involvement in transatlantic trade talks (namely USA, China, Brazil) and complex negotiations between various parties (including MOD, FCO, DED and Shorts) in the face of stiff international competition vying for the contract to build the new RAF trainer plane. Not only was the successful awarding of the contract to Shorts deemed vital to safeguard Shorts future work programme, but the negotiations occurred at a sensitive time when the Government was considering the options for 'disposal' of Shorts (i.e. privatisation). It was feared by officials that the Secretary of State's handling of the situation might incur 'criticism that the Government is taking undue risk with Northern Ireland's largest and most prestigious manufacturing employer...'

Shorts was sold to Bombardier in June 1989.

CENT/1/18/46A	1986-1989	Anglo Irish – Topics (Post A.I. Agreement)
		<p>File contains various briefing papers on Anglo Irish issues, including the consideration of the territorial waters of Northern Ireland with particular reference to environmental concerns in the Irish Sea (specifically possible pollution from Sellafield power plant).</p>
		<p>Papers also detail a resolution passed by various public sector bodies (including Education and Library Boards) in protest at the Anglo Irish Agreement. Education Minister Brian Mawhinney responded to the Chief Officer of one Board, defending the Agreement whilst acknowledging that it had not been able to normalise community relations, stating that ‘unless the Nationalist community as a whole comes to greater acceptance of Northern Ireland’s institutions, the task of eradicating terrorism will be all the more difficult...’</p>
CENT/1/18/48A	1986-1989	District Councils – Unionist Protest Vol. 2
		<p>File details the political protest actions of local government councillors against the Anglo-Irish Agreement, including consideration of emergency intervention under the <i>Local Government (Temporary Provisions (NI) Order 1986</i>, in which Government could assume control of vital functions such as contract awarding, services, grants to community groups, public appointment, licensing, etc. At the same time, Government was looking to take measures against Sinn Fein supporting Councillors, particularly in light of their early refusal to sign an oath of non violence.</p>

**CENT/1/18/51A 1988-1989 Public Appointments – District Council
Representation**

File includes detailed assessment by the Political Development Group of ongoing Local Government protests and local elections.

'Moreover, the Government should not be seen to be favouring one party (and indirectly encouraging votes for it) at the expense of another. Not only would this be unconstitutional, but it would be counterproductive if the perceived victim should turn it to party advantage...Sinn Fein will probably seek to maximise the advantages of the media ban during the election campaign...in regard to the SDLP, it comes as no surprise that the party is not well organised nor in many instances has it put in the hard constituency work needed to build a solid following. However, this is not true in the areas dominated by the three MPs...It is felt that the overall Sinn Fein vote will not weaken; the challenge from Republican Sinn Fein will not materialise since RSF candidates declined the declaration of non violence. If Sinn Fein hold onto their present representation in Belfast, this could be considered by them to be a good result and would be at the expense of the SDLP – once again a reflection of the SDLPs poor organisation and lack of constituency work in West Belfast...the Unionist stance on the presence of Sinn Fein members on Councils will continue to be a major factor after the elections...Ministers could come under heavy pressure to change their position on refusing to meet Council deputations which included Sinn Fein members who had signed the declaration (non

violence)...this analysis suggests, therefore, that Government, whilst recognising the fundamental weaknesses in the present Local Government arrangements in Northern Ireland, should not contemplate any significant changes as long as devolution remains its objective...'

CENT/1/18/52A 1989-1989

Political Development, January 1989 – April 1989

File contains the minutes of the Political Development Group, consisting of detailed discussion on Northern Ireland's constitutional affairs, an analysis of the various political groupings and their positions (shedding light on their respective strengths, vulnerabilities, philosophies, etc.), approaches for the Secretary of State to defend the UK Government position and interpretation of the parties' strategies. Anglo Irish issues under examination included devolution, health, education, industry, fair employment, security, etc. In one briefing ahead of a proposed meeting with Archbishop Daly, officials noted of the senior churchman:

'He has in the past stressed his view that the Sinn Fein vote in Derry is not a reflection of support for violence, but of the community's alienation and frustration at a lack of economic, social and political progress...he feels that constitutional politics must succeed or Sinn Fein support will continue to grow. With his beliefs and his position, he can influence Mr Hume. He will not want to act in any sense as an 'intermediary' but he can serve as a message bearer...the Minister might see the objective of his talk with Bishop Daly as being to listen...and to encourage him to disseminate a constructive

message about the Government's intentions and the role that the SDLP have to play in achieving political progress...'

CENT/3/91A

1988-1989

Miscellaneous Department of Economic Development Matters

File contains detailed papers, ministerial correspondence and briefings on a diverse array of economic matters including local unemployment, trade, business, industry, deregulation, tourism, etc.

CENT/3/96A

1987-1987

Disinvestment - The McBride Principles.

File reveals UK Government attempts to counteract the momentum of the Irish American campaign on the MacBride Principles, including correspondence between Ministers and HM Ambassador in Washington. The prevailing feeling in Washington was that, following the Anglo Irish Agreement (and what many Americans perceived as a gradual drop off in violence in the Province), interest in Northern Ireland had noticeably decreased in many quarters as a political issue. However, fair employment remained a contentious matter on both sides of the Atlantic.



Department of Economic Development

DED/3/87

1989-1989

Kilroot Phase II – Vol. 6

File details concerns raised about pollution from the proposed second phase of the Kilroot development and the extension to Northern Ireland's largest power station, which was causing Government (and Dept. of Economic Development in particular) to consider a policy switch.

DED/3/98

1987-1989

West Belfast Steering Group

File details the Government debate about the provision of money to 'Catholic West Belfast' and the issue of countering criticism not only from Protestant politicians of imbalance in terms of provision of financial assistance, but of 'crude political reaction' to what some observers saw as assistance to those who support the killing of British soldiers. Government officials also recognised that this solution would also need to include the final fate of Mackies.

'a declaration of goodwill for West Belfast followed by the closure of Mackies could only provoke hollow laughter...'

Government officials also conceded that the IRA would inevitably target those political and community representatives from West Belfast who were seen to support financial assistance from the UK 'Whilst the present degree of violence continues, no economic magic wand is available to the Government...'

Department of Education

ED/13/2/898 1988 - 1989 The Belfast Initiative – West Belfast. Includes Making Belfast Work Action Plan for the economic regeneration of West Belfast

File notes the ongoing problem in West Belfast in terms of low morale in teachers (and pupils) in what was agreed was an area of economic and social deprivation. A multi-tiered approach was planned, with the physical environment in schools being looked at, the enhancement of further education at Whiterock and the rationalisation of Secondary schools in the West Belfast area.

Department of the Environment

ENV/7/9/49

1988-1989

Consultation papers on Local Government

File contains detailed papers from the Political Affairs Division, including a confidential memo (14th September 1988) following a meeting with Eddie McGrady of the SDLP.

'McGrady was clearly relieved that the SDLP / Sinn Fein talks had come to an end. He made clear that he had never any faith in this exercise...In his view there had never been any prospect of persuading Sinn Fein to abandon the armed struggle. Sinn Fein's lack of sincerity had been demonstrated by the fact that the violence had escalated while the talks were going on. He was also dismissive of the suggestion of a potential split in the Sinn Fein movement between political and military wings. In contrast to Seamus Mallon (my minute of 6 September), McGrady believes that the only conceivable way in which progress can be made in the immediate future is through talks between the Northern Ireland political parties about devolution, since he is under no illusion (unlike some of his colleagues) that the Unionists can be persuaded to talk to Dublin...McGrady spoke very strongly about the Government's decision to go ahead with the declaration of non-violence for local elections. He considers this decision to be completely misguided...'

**ENV/32/2/11 and 1989-1989
ENV/32/2/13**

**Belfast Development Office – Laganside – River
Lagan Weir**

Two files covering the project to improve the Lagan waterside in Belfast, through the development of a weir to raise the water level, dredging out the riverbed (using a specially designed Harland & Wolff vessel), the oxygenation of the river, the building of an attractive waterfront area and by extension, the encouragement of various recreational pursuits in the river.

Department of Finance and Personnel

DFP/6/119A

1984-1988

War Plan

File covers the (Northern Ireland Office-directed) strategy for Northern Ireland following a war with the USSR. Papers detail the chain of likely events, from political unrest and international tensions, to what officials termed the 'transition to war', or the outbreak of conventional warfare with Eastern Bloc forces and the inevitable escalation to a limited or massive thermonuclear weapon exchange.

In one secret memo, the following chilling timetable was suggested:

- 'Period of tension - 60 days (including 7 days warning of war)', followed by
- 'Conventional war - 30 days', followed by
- 'Exchange of missiles - short period' and finally
- 'Resumption of supplies - 60 days later...'

Officials noted that the resultant devastation would render much of government ineffective, and any law making capacity or other official function, if they survived, would be run from deep bunkers by second tier public servants (assuming that all higher government offices had already been destroyed). Matters were examined such as the storage of cash in safe places (protected by seconded armed ex police officers), seizure of land for government use in time of war, payment of public servant salaries, the movement of valuable records / documents to safe places and a war savings plan. File also includes a

historical talk given in c.1955 to senior officials on how Northern Ireland evacuees were moved to safety (particularly children) during the Second World War, given by the Deputy Keeper of the Records from the *Public Record Office of Northern Ireland*, D.A. Chart, a talk which officials in the 1980s deemed useful in terms of 'lessons learned'.

Department of Health and Social Services

HSS/13/45/1	1988-1989	Operational Planning Branch, Antrim Area Hospital - MRUK Report
		<p>File covers the Ballymena Borough Council (together with over 100 GPs) opposition to the projected new Area Hospital at Antrim. Backed by the Secretary of State Tom King and Health Minister Richard Needham, the projected new build was due to cost £25 million.</p> <p>Dr Paisley had then informed the Councillors that Tom King had assured him that he would receive a deputation to hear their argument against the hospital and had written to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher stating his disappointment at this meeting not happening.</p> <p>A Northern Ireland Information Service press release attempted to counter negative publicity, instead painting a more optimistic picture of the plan, describing the £25 million which would benefit local business (construction firms, medical equipment manufacturers, etc.).</p>
HSS/11/68/16A	1989	Dealing with Child Abuse Analysis of Comments Received on Draft Guidance and Circular.
		<p>File deals largely with the repercussions of the Hughes Inquiry and the <i>Committee of Inquiry into Children's Homes and Hostels</i>.</p>

HSS/13/41/51A 1984-1989 Emergencies and War Planning Vol.1.

File reveals detailed planning for 'transition to war', including architectural plans for a underground nuclear fallout bunker to accommodate civil servants, civil defence preparations (including mass storage areas for dead, debris clearance crews, pest control, re-housing and feeding of survivors)



Northern Ireland Office

NIO/12/686

1985-1989

Prisons – Mental Health Miscellaneous Papers

File examines mental health in Northern Ireland's prison system and the lack of secure accommodation for severely disturbed prisoners, particularly focussing on the Ministerial response to criticism levelled at the state of mental health care in the UK penal system, by the *New Statesman* magazine.

'the Northern Ireland prison population (convicted and remand) does not include such a large psychiatric element as is reported in the English prisons...some two thirds of the NI figure represents prisoners charged with terrorist type offences and if this sector is discounted the 'non terrorist' prison population is approximately 44 per 100,000, less than half the figure for England and Wales...Even with the non terrorist prison population, major psychiatric problems do not figure as prominently as in England. Probable reasons include a lack of large conurbations where socio-psychological problems are particularly liable to generate crime, a lack (so far) of a major hard drug problem, possibly legislature differences and relatively little overcrowding in NI prisons...'

The report went on however to recognise a substantial intermediate grouping, between psychiatric and non psychiatric prisoners – the personality/behavioural disorder group, 'whose proper placement remains a matter of controversy...'

NIO/12/255A **1986-1989** **Prisons – Hunger Strikes. 1980/81 Hunger Strikes
Maze Prison – Proposed book by Mr Padriag
O'Malley**

File deals with NIO deliberations over Padraig O'Malley's intended book dealing with the 1980-81 Republican prisoners and their *Special Category Status* protests in HMP Maze. He sought access to question former staff, including the Parliamentary Under Secretary and former prison service officials, about such issues as the hypothesis that during the first and second hunger strikes, a secret channel of communication had been opened between UK Government (notably the Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Irish Republican leadership, using an intermediary dubbed 'Mountain Climber'.

In the words of one NIO official who added his personal comments at the bottom of one letter, 'Mr O'Malley's book may well turn out to be a serious, not wholly unbalanced study of the 1980/81 hunger strikes: these were, in any view, significant events of legitimate public interest...'

NIO/10/11/33A **1982-1986** **Transfer of Prisoners to Northern Ireland.**

File covers various cases of requests for extradition and routine transfer between prisons from outside Northern Ireland. Most notably, this includes detailed papers on the legal negotiations, human rights aspects (specifically the view of the *Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights* – SACHR) and high level official meetings held concerning the high profile extradition involving two senior Republicans Brendan McFarlane and Gerry Kelly,

who had been at large since the 1983 Maze escape, and were living in the Netherlands. This case had caused problems for the UK Government's extradition case which was heard in a Dutch court, where it was argued by the counsel for the defence that the two fugitives should not be extradited due to the political nature of their offences.

