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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

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cc PSh
PSS
Counsellors
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Mr Mathews
Mr Russell
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SECRET - By Courier Service

18 June 1987

Dear Assistant Secretary

I attach herewith a paper setting out some views on the post-general election situation at Westminster, which Ted Smyth and I have compiled.

Appended to it are biographical notes of some of the figures covered in the body of the report.

You may, in view of the fact that the paper touches somewhat frankly and personally on some prominent British political figures, wish to consider whether its circulation should perhaps be restricted.

Yours sincerely

Richard Ryan
Richard Ryan
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

Mr Eamon O Tuathail
Assistant Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin 2

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17 Grosvenor Place

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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

SECRET - By Courier Service

18 June 1987

THE POST-ELECTION SITUATION AT WESTMINSTER1. General

A great deal of speculative fog - about the end of the two party system in Britain, a Labour breakthrough, an Alliance breakthrough, a hung Parliament with a rôle for the Unionists, the voters' detection of Mrs Thatcher's metallic nature, the two nation society, etc - has been swept away, and Mrs Thatcher has sailed through, intact and triumphant. Many questions and doubts remain unanswered, and will no doubt reassert themselves in due course, but for the foreseeable future we, like the rest of the world, will be dealing with a Prime Minister whose convictions have been hardened by her triumph and what she must see as a vindication of her policies and her personal stamp on British political life. The Conservative Parliamentary Party, re-assembling yesterday and today at Westminster, is one in which the one-nation voices of the "caring centre" or the whispering conscience of the Party, will not be heard for some time to come. A first round of contact at Westminster confirms the feeling that the rather simplistic convictions of Mrs Thatcher, and her supporters on the Right, will assert themselves over the next 2 - 3 years, free of the whispered warnings from the centre and wet left side of the Party.

Mrs Thatcher, more than anyone else in the Government, is credited with the resounding electoral victory of 11 June. Even though her majority was slightly reduced to 102 her freedom of manoeuvre within the Government is vastly increased. It is even accepted now that if she wishes, depending on her husband's health, she could stay on as Prime Minister to attempt a fourth term in 1991/92 when she would still be only 65 years of age. Furthermore, as long as the Opposition is split 32% (Labour) and 23% (Alliance) the Conservatives with 43% could continue to command a Commons majority in another election under the straight vote system.

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Alliance

There is a general consensus that the Alliance experiment has failed. The SDP, down to 5 seats, has lost its courage and conviction, as well as most of its driving force. The Liberals are once again looking into their souls: whether or not an SDP-Liberal merger is agreed on, we can probably for practical purposes take our eyes off the Alliance phenomenon that has engaged so much interest and attention in recent years. There is speculation - too much perhaps - that David Steel will be replaced by Paddy Ashdown who is, compared to Steel, a lightweight; and speculation too - perhaps worth more attention - that David Owen will go to the backbenches and become a Powell-like figure, a brooding shadow which Mrs Thatcher would find disturbing and intellectually unsettling.

Labour

Last night, following a dinner given by Sir Geoffrey Howe, Neil and Glenys Kinnock came back for a drink and, as it turned out, a five-hour soul-searching conversation. In summary, it would be hard to exaggerate his collapse of confidence and, almost incredibly, of conviction. He conceded that he would have reversed the defence policy but had crossed the threshold before he saw the full implications. I recalled to him our last conversation on the subject when he said "I can't go back - there is an open grave six feet behind me", and he said that is how it was. His wife zoomed in on him here and one could see, as it were, the heart of his dilemma on the question.

He foresees huge problems with the militants who are now greatly strengthened on his backbenches. He said that Livingstone "is not the worst by half". He, John Smith, Gould and the other pragmatists feel that Healy and Hattersley let them down badly in the campaign and will let them down in the next battle, that with the militants. He said that he will fight it with everything he has, but that the "superficial brylcream eloquence" of the militants and, particularly, their knowledge of how to fight him on legal grounds and under the Labour charter make his task in his own view "pretty impossible".

He has no worries about his position as leader but, despite the four years or so that he has to prepare for the next election, he said (in a way that smacked of more than just post-election blues) that he does not believe he can do it. The Left, he said, does not care whether Labour wins the next election, or any election; and the media's attitude to Labour (for which he took, he said, some of the blame) means that any and all failures on his part in the coming battle will be amplified outward to the electorate.

While he agreed fully that the Alliance has flopped, he believes that it will nevertheless continue to take that share of the vote which Labour would vitally need for a comeback.

I thanked him very warmly for his personal intervention following Roy Hattersley's very damaging remarks (about doing a deal with Sinn Fein as Labour policy in Government) during the election campaign. He said that

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he personally had a fierce row with Hattersley about it and, while he hoped his strong statement helped to retrieve the situation, he regretted very much that the West Belfast seat was not captured.

2. Our friends at Westminster

(i) Government

There were five casualties in the Cabinet reshuffle last Saturday, 13 June (all of whom we had predicted) and other Secretaries of State were switched around to reflect Mrs Thatcher's own policy preferences. For example, Peter Walker, a critic of Thatcherism, accepted the humiliation of Wales and Lord Young was given the key post of Trade and Industry. However, a major reshuffle in Autumn 1988 (at the end of the coming Parliamentary session) depends on Sir Geoffrey Howe being willing to become Lord Chancellor so that consequent changes can be made for the benefit of rising stars like Cecil Parkinson and Kenneth Baker.

Out went Lord Hailsham, Norman Tebbit, John Biffen, Michael Jopling and Nicholas Edwards.

In came Sir Michael Havers (Lord Chancellor), Cecil Parkinson (Energy), John Wakeham (Leader of Commons) and John Major (Chief Secretary to Treasury). Kenneth Clarke who was already in the Cabinet was appointed to Tebbit's position as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Sir Patrick Mayhew becomes Attorney General and Nicholas Lyell replaces him as Solicitor General.

Brief biographical notes of the new Ministers (including John Stanley) is appended.

At Junior Ministerial Level Mrs Thatcher elevated many Tory MP's who share her economic and social philosophy: examples are John Cope (Education), Michael Howard (Environment), Tony Newton (Health) and David Mitchell (Transport). Well-known Thatcherites remain prominent such as John Stanley (NIO), David Mellor (FCO), Alan Clarke (Trade) and Norman Lamont (Financial Secretary to the Treasury).

Thatcher All the signals from Mrs Thatcher before 11 June and since are that she wishes to have a serious working relationship with Dublin especially in relation to N.I.

The Northern Ireland problem is by no means a priority for the third Thatcher Administration because next Thursday's Queen's Speech will include bills on housing, education, rates reform, trade unions and criminal justice. But the continued operational success of the IRA (and we might bear in mind her anger at restrictions imposed on her movements during her election campaign) and the fear of an assassination of Royalty or a Cabinet Secretary remain a source of great concern for the Prime Minister.

John Stanley's move sideways from defence to NIO is generally assessed by observers here as a message by Mrs Thatcher that she intends to get down to the terrorism problem with someone effective in that area. He will, it is said, be blunt and authoritative.

Although her relationship with Tom King has, we believe, improved somewhat, it is said that Mrs Thatcher still thinks he talks too much and achieves too little. King would like an economics portfolio in 1988 but his future is by no means assured.

There is a feeling here that Mrs Thatcher may not be particularly anxious just now to explore political developments in Northern Ireland except insofar as they will perhaps be shown to have an impact against the IRA. Unionist isolation in the 1980's is very real compared to their membership of the Tory world of earlier years - e.g. Robin Chichester Clarke, Minister of State in Heath's Government, and John Knox Connyingham, PPS to Macmillan. Furthermore, the tendency of British Governments to stick by the status quo in N.I. - which for so long militated against nationalists - is now operating in favour of the Agreement against Unionist protests.

ilsham The removal of Lord Hailsham as Lord Chancellor represents the removal of the most implacable and articulate Unionist voice in the Government. If he had not gone to the lengths he had in Cabinet last year on the three-man courts issue (in the face of conversion on the part of Howe, Hurd and King), I believe that Sir Michael Havers (who was not for three-man courts, but who is a politician of self-interest rather than conviction, and who at the time had his eye on Hailsham's job) would not have gone against us.

vers His replacement by Havers is welcome. He has been involved in the Agreement process from the beginning and, in a Government in which by my calculation more than a dozen Ministers are either indifferent to or are even slightly turned off by the Northern Ireland question, he will at least represent a voice of informed realism in the Cabinet. He may perhaps also provide us with some hints of Cabinet proceedings, a valuable asset which we have not had in an effective way since Lord Gowrie resigned from the Cabinet last year.

It must, however, be stressed that Havers is not in the bag on legal questions. If he did not have to look over his shoulder, we could perhaps bring him round on the three-man courts question, and could at least engage him on even more difficult legal matters. An advantage here would be Havers' personal dislike of Lowry and his steadily increasing hostility toward the Unionist politicians. Further, he says frankly that he believes in principle in the idea of constitutional movement on Ireland and he elaborates occasionally (if a little wildly) on an outline federal settlement (a Dublin Parliament with, initially, weighted Unionist representation; major British financial subsidies over an agreed period, and so on). Havers is not, however, a brilliant intellectual and his very survival demonstrates his weather eye and his ability to trim his sails in rough wind.

yhew Over his shoulder he now has Sir Patrick Mayhew, promoted from Solicitor-General to Attorney General (ref my report of 24 April on a conversation with him and a subsequent report of Havers' "post mortem" with Mayhew on that discussion).

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Havers is of course now the highest legal authority in the land, and number three in the Cabinet: he need not look over his shoulder (Hailsham certainly did not). It is my view, however, that Havers will not wish to make unnecessary waves with Mayhew, and that major legal reform in Northern Ireland will gain Havers' stamp of approval most easily if we can persuade Mayhew round to our point of view.

Mayhew may well have roughly the same intellectual convictions about the Union as Airey Neave had, and as Margaret Thatcher had before 1983. At first sight, like them, he may seem unassailable, simplistic and (from where we stand) perhaps pompous and a bit archaic. It may just be, however, that, given his high intelligence and his at this stage somewhat subliminal Irishness (more properly, perhaps, Anglo-Irishness), a systematic job of persuasion could firstly engage him and then, just perhaps, bring him over at least some of the thresholds that at present separate him from us. Havers has strongly recommended that our Attorney General should get together with Mayhew (and with him), and this would seem to be a very pragmatic beginning to a persuasion process which, if it were thought to be worthwhile, would take time. At the London end, and with the Havers connection, we could probably also edge this matter forward. As reported yesterday, Havers has agreed to come to dinner with Mayhew (if we can get him) and the new Solicitor-General, Sir Nicholas Lyell. It may be worth noting that Mayhew changed his mind on hanging which he backed in 1979 and voted against in 1982.

ell
Sir Nicholas Lyell, the new Solicitor-General, has been cultivated over the past two years (ref reports of 15.5.'85, 19.11.'85, 12.5.'86, 15.5.'86, 10.11.'86) and throughout that process expressed agreement with and support for our policies. He is considered to be one of the brightest figures in Parliament and must surely be a front runner to become a future Attorney General and perhaps even, in due course, Lord Chancellor. There is every reason to hope that further cultivation of him will be useful, both in itself and vis-a-vis Patrick Mayhew.

Whitelaw
Lord Whitelaw is the weather-cock in the Cabinet and this perhaps compensates for a slight cerebral shortage. We know that he read the weather on the three-man courts issue and that, despite the positive attitude of Howe, Hurd and King, he opted not to face up to Hailsham: he very likely gave this line to the Prime Minister. Overall, however, despite rumours that he is sceptical about the Agreement, and given the Prime Minister's convictions about the Agreement, we have no reason to believe that he will rock the boat.

Howe
Hurd
Wakeham
Howe and Hurd are, as we know, two strong intellectual forces behind the Agreement. Wakeham as Chief Whip has been cultivated by us, and his wife's murder in Brighton and his own still painful leg injuries have not prevented him from retaining (after a very difficult personal process) objectivity on Irish as well as other matters. He is a dissembling politician who clearly revels in the cut and thrust of life at Westminster and in the manipulation of power. As Leader of the House he will be a most valuable contact.

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I had a conversation last night with Tom King (after dinner at the Foreign Office). He said that he feels he is getting on very well with

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Dublin and that, while he is sorry to lose Nick Scott's expertise, he has every confidence that John Stanley will make a very good Minister of State. I hinted a little that it is very important that new figures on the scene should comprehend the political nature of the problem, that its centre is not at all a simple battle against terrorism or to do with border security. King said emphatically that he himself of course agreed, and that he had every expectation that Stanley would too. He said he was anxious that Dublin should accept this, and that Stanley, with his military expertise, is not just a sop to the Unionists and a civvy general charged only to cut up rough on the security side. King then went on in his usual way to stress the security problem.

(ii) Losses at Westminster

We have lost eight significant contacts: Gerald Malone (C, Scottish Whip), Michael Ancram (C, Parly Under-Sec of State for Scotland), Peter Bruinvels (C), Fred Silvester (C), Anna McCurley (C), Alf Dubs (Lab), Oonagh McDonald (Lab) and Clement Freud (L).

This is regrettable, but we perhaps expected to lose many others and by and large our allies are in good health.

(iii) Promotions

Three strong supporters have been given ministerial posts: John Cope (Minister of State for Employment), Robert Jackson (Under Secretary of State for Education and Science), and Colin Moynihan (Minister for Sport). We retain good friends at Ministerial level: Chris Patten, Timothy Eggar, Christopher Chope, Nicholas Scott, Peter Bottomly and Norman Lamont.

3. The Unionists' return to Westminster

It is a certain fact that, short of giving any consolation to the Unionists regarding tampering with the Agreement, the Unionists will be very warmly welcomed at Westminster. Wakeham, as Leader, and David Waddington as Chief Whip will surely go out of their way to be as positive as possible, to improve the ways in which Northern Ireland business is conducted, and to ensure that Ministers and backbenchers also go deliberately out of their way to give the Unionists a hearing. This is not to say that Unionist policies, such as they are, will necessarily bowl anyone over, or that that is intended; rather the overriding purpose will be to try very hard to bed the Unionists down and to re-establish them in their proper constitutional and parliamentary environment.

The Unionists are returning following a period when Northern Ireland has hardly featured in the political landscape (apart from a brief flare-up during the election campaign). Also, as previously reported, there is a small but growing trickle of dissatisfaction in Westminster, particularly in the Tory backbenches, with lack of progress as they see it under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This relates in a very simple way to the average MP's lack of real understanding of the nature of the problem; to their naive assumption that the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to which they gave their overwhelming support, was somehow (and they had no idea how) a panacea

for the problem; and to their consequent lack of comprehension at ongoing violence, the Unionist response, and the loyalist antics which characterised the months following the Agreement. The average MP assumed that following the Agreement the Northern Ireland problem would somehow just go away.

We have made efforts to dry up this slow trickle of disaffection through continued contacts with selected MPs, particularly on the right wing of the Conservative backbenches. However, because of (fully understandable) financial restraints the rhythm of such contacts has slowed very much. In the security debate in the Commons on 6 May, following the Gibson murders, when the Unionists were present, the hot and heavy allegations against the Agreement (failure on security grounds etc) made by the Unionists and by their right wing Conservative friends were simply not answered, as they would previously have been, by many figures on the Conservative backbenches, because they were not there. This vividly illustrated the fact that our wide range of contacts need constant ongoing cultivation and briefing with speaking points for the House: otherwise, they just get on with their own personal busy preoccupations. They expect to be cultivated, and are prepared in large part to pretty well take our side on the basis of comprehensive briefing, but it is a fact that without that cultivation old habits re-assert themselves and they perhaps just assume that they are not needed for a debate, such as that on 6 May, if they have not been cultivated specifically for it. In this overall context, the Unionists may, if their return is characterised with a measure of sophistication, reason and realism (and their Conservative friends will surely strive to achieve this), find - perhaps to their surprise - that the door they are pushing may not be as closed as they may have expected. They will certainly find that some important right wing Conservatives who in the past allowed themselves to be swayed by us, may now, for lack of regular bolstering and reassurance about the Agreement, be fair game for a reasoned and carefully presented anti-Agreement argument.

This argument could attempt to:

- (a) exploit a major IRA atrocity (such as a Royal) or considerably intensified violence to erroneously accuse Dublin of holding back in the fight against terrorism and therefore being unworthy of British Government confidence in running N.I.;
- (b) outmanoeuvre the SDLP to demonstrate that Unionist "reasonableness" on devolution is being rejected by nationalist triumphalism.

Parliament will re-assemble on 25 June and run for 5-6 weeks. It is suggested this will be a crucial period during which we need to consolidate our influence at the very least over those targets on the backbenches whom Ian Gow and others will undoubtedly have identified for an anti-Agreement lobbying campaign by the Unionists and their friends.

Even if, for whatever reason, we lost a significant number of supporters to the anti-Agreement campaign, there is, it is suggested, further strong reason for a strong lobbying campaign at Westminster (continuing when

Parliament resumes in the Autumn). This is that, willy nilly, the Agreement is coming to be seen in Westminster not for all that it is: its complex underlying philosophy is being lost sight of, and it is becoming seen as an Agreement to do very largely with how well the Republic performs on what the real nature of the Agreement is being seen as: the simple fight against terrorism with a strong emphasis on the border as the key; that, somehow, if anti-terrorist operations on the border were significantly enhanced with the Republic's fuller cooperation, the heart of the problem would in very large part be grasped. John Stanley's appointment, despite what Tom King may say, must be a potential enhancing force in this direction unless Stanley is brought successfully (but by whom?) down and through the process of learning the complex reality of the problem and our prescription for it. It is proposed, therefore, that we should as a priority, and up to the extent permitted by the resources available, try to counter but at least minimise disaffection, particularly on the part of Tory right-wingers, to the anti-Agreement lobby.

As part of this exercise, it is suggested that we should bring one, or even two, small groups of carefully selected Conservative backbenchers to Dublin before the Summer recess. These could consist of four or, at the most, five in each group, but I believe that the effect of an opportunity to meet Government members and of consolidation at political level of what they hear here could play a major part in keeping some of them out of the Unionist bag and of galvanising others to speak out strongly in our interest both on the floor of the House and directly to those who will be seeking to unsettle them. The ideal framework for such a visit would be a working dinner given by the Tanaiste with officials, a meeting with the Taoiseach the following morning, and a lunch hosted by another Minister before departure. It goes without saying that, if this were thought desirable, we would need to begin making preparations without delay.

It is also suggested that a similar visit to Dublin of Westminster lobby journalists and London editors to be organised by Ted Smyth would help to reassert our understanding of what the Agreement should be achieving.

4. The direct rule debate

This will be the next major exchange, which the Government will watch carefully, at which the "weather" in Parliament vis-a-vis Northern Ireland policy overall, and the Agreement, and Anglo-Irish relations, will be assessed. We will endeavour to ensure through the processes recommended above, and through as many briefing sessions with MPs as possible, that the will of Parliament as expressed overwhelmingly in the vote on the Agreement, is as far as possible reiterated and that the Government's commitment to the present Anglo-Irish relationship is fully supported from the backbenches for all to see.

5. The Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, the Maguires case

Successive Irish Governments have, by and large, not tripped sensitive wires in Britain where the strongest allies of those concerned are in fact senior right wing public and political figures who would resent very much these matters becoming anything other than questions of "British justice".

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The Birmingham Six case will be heard by the Court of Appeal on 2 November. We must hope that the new evidence being assembled will lead to the right result in the first instance. However, there have been cases where pardons or innocent verdicts have followed only on several bouts in the Court of Appeal. We need, therefore, to bear in mind that they may not come clear in the November Court of Appeal and that further efforts by the Government and by all those concerned may be necessary before we get the right result.

The Guildford Four case is under reconsideration by Douglas Hurd. While Hurd is himself very much personally engaged on the file, we must be grateful that David Mellor, his previous Minister of State, who had no sympathy with any of these cases, has been moved out (to the FCO) and replaced by John Patten who was an Under-Secretary in NI 1981-83. Again, we must hope that this re-consideration process will produce the right result, but we cannot of course be sure, and we have no deadline: on timing, I will however reiterate to Edward Bickham, Douglas Hurd's Political Adviser, that an early and positive outcome is urgently sought. This could be valuably pursued too at political level with the Home Secretary.

The Maguires case continues to have widespread and strong support by senior public and political figures. However, the mechanism which Douglas Hurd asserts is needed to initiate a review (he is technically wrong here, and is basing his position on standard practice, not any actual restriction on his authority), the submission of new evidence not previously heard in court, is not easily foreseeable in this case.

6. The Extradition Act

Whether this Act comes into force on 1 December next, or later, or ever, is of course a matter for the Government. Insofar as British attitudes are detectable (from remarks offered gartuitously as it is not a subject raised by me in conversations), Havers' attitude, stated categorically, is that if a prima facie element were introduced, they would not want it at all.

Right wing Conservatives generally doubt the Irish Government's intention (and this includes the previous Government) to go through with it. They would of course be delighted, as would the Unionists, if the Act did not come into force or was, as they would see it, made somehow infirm. If it were to come into effect, this would on the other hand have a very positive effect vis-a-vis Government and Parliament here.

As stated above, British views are not sought on this matter, and I relay the above points for information only. Any further such views will also be forwarded.

7. Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Body

The recent Oireachtas-Westminster meeting in the IPU framework was, it may be said, a very considerable success. More British Parliamentarians applied to participate than have ever done for any previous such visit, including even Soviet and American delegations. Further, its form, with

APPENDIX

a serious and comprehensive agenda and a minimum of social activity, and the level of debate, placed it quite simply in a unique category: this has got about in Westminster and there is very serious enthusiasm for a return session in Dublin, perhaps later in the year when, it is hoped and expected, discussions could take place inter alia on the modalities of an Inter-Parliamentary Body.

As we know, Mrs Thatcher has no more enthusiasm for this idea than for the European Parliament or any other non-Westminster parliamentary activity which she can not control. However, force majeure, in the form of the size and quality of the IPU meeting, has put the ball in our court if we wish to proceed. If it is in fact decided to go ahead with a meeting in, say, November, then we can certainly ensure that a first class delegation from Westminster will be assembled, and that we can pretty well guide them in their interventions toward whatever broad conclusions are desired.

Richard Ryan
Richard Ryan
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

World probably have been made Foreign Secretary in June 1981 after the Election but for Tony Blair's interview by his program witness, Sir Kenneth, alleging that he had reneged on promise to marry her. He was forced to resign from Cabinet October 1981. Credited with a history in key post of Party Chairman (1981-82) having been Secretary of Trade 1979-81. Like Tebbit has working class background (father a Lanchester railway porter) but unlike Tebbit has personally earned his money and good looks. Graduated off with an Honours and Law degree from Cambridge where he received a running blue.

Although he has an Irish Catholic mother - "Betty" Bridget Graham - he has shown no enthusiasm in doing for developing Irish links. In fact he went to a Church of England Primary School and like others before him of humble or Irish origin seems to have adopted a high-brow style for his advancement. In the 1982 vote, for example, he backed hanging for terrorists.

It should also be remembered that Verkerke's major public acclaim followed his role as spokesman for the inner "Palace" cabinet in April 1982. Two years later he defended the Heirloom sinking as reinforcing "our military credibility".

3. Mr. Don John Wakeham, Leader of House of Commons (53 on 22 June)

was Chief Whip (1983-87) where he was regarded as highly skilled and patient. Still suffers from terrible pain arising out of injuries in the October 1984 Brighton bombing where his wife Roberta was killed. Unlike Tebbit his tragic experiences did not embitter him towards Ireland and he has demonstrated the same sense of fairness and honesty towards Irish matters as he does in domestic issues. Wakeham's skills will be very important for Mrs Thatcher's hopes to get the 12 Unionist MPs back to the Commons and, eventually, leading to live with the Agreement.

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A P P E N D I X

Brief Notes on some Additions to Government

1. Sir Michael Havers QC, Lord Chancellor: (64)

Son of Sir Cecil Havers, a High Court Judge, a Cambridge graduate, ex RNVR Lieutenant in World War II. Author of four books on trials. Elected MP in 1970. Promoted to Solicitor-General and knighted in November 1972 in succession to Sir Geoffrey Howe. When Mrs Thatcher became P.M. in May 1979 he was named Attorney General. In November 1981 his Wimbledon flat was bombed by the IRA in his absence. He led the prosecution in the Guildford Four trial and broke Prof Hugh Hambleton, the alleged soviet spy, on the stand in 1982.

2. Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson, Energy (55) Major contender (with Baker) to succeed Mrs Thatcher.

Would probably have been made Foreign Secretary in June 1983 after the Election but for Times interview by his pregnant mistress, Sara Keys, alleging that he had reneged on promise to marry her. Eventually forced to resign from Cabinet October 1983. Credited with '83 victory in key post of Party Chairman (1981-83) having been a junior Minister of Trade 1979-81. Like Tebbit has working class origins (father a Lancashire railway plater) but unlike Tebbit has personable manner and good looks, rounded off with an English and Law degree from Cambridge where he received a running Blue.

Although he has an Irish Catholic mother - "Betty" Bridget Graham - he has shown no enthusiasm to date for developing Irish links. In fact he went to a Church of England Primary School and like others before him of humble or Irish origin seems to have adopted a high Tory style for his advancement. In the 1982 vote, for example, he backed hanging for terrorists.

It should also be remembered that Parkinson's major public acclaim followed his role as spokesman for the inner "Falklands War Cabinet" in April 1982. Two years later he defended the Belgrano sinking as reinforcing "our military credibility".

3. Rt Hon John Wakeham, Leader of House of Commons (55 on 22 June)

Was Chief Whip (1983-87) where he was regarded as highly skilled and patient. Still suffers from terrible pains arising out of injuries in the October 1984 Brighton bombing where his wife Roberta was killed. Unlike Tebbit his tragic experiences did not embitter him towards Ireland and he has demonstrated the same sense of fairness and humanity towards Irish matters as he does to domestic issues. Wakeham's skills will be very important for Mrs Thatcher's hopes to get the 13 Unionist MP's back to the Commons and, perhaps eventually, learning to live with the Agreement.

His father Major Walter Wakeham was an engineer and company director, John Wakeham qualified as an accountant and is now an underwriting member of Lloyd's Syndicate and a shareholder in a number of companies.

In July 1985 he married Alison Ward, his secretary.

4. John Major, Chief Secretary to the Treasury (44)

A banker by profession who has risen rapidly to the Cabinet since he was first elected in 1979. A former PPS to Patrick Mayhew in 1981 he has only been a Parliamentary Under Secretary for Social Security since September 1985. He is anti-hanging and anti-racialism but he earned his spurs defending the eviction of campers at Molesworth in February 1985 despite his earlier doubts about cruise missiles.

5. Sir Patrick Mayhew, Attorney General (57)

His father was an oil executive and from his mother, Sheila Burke-Roche, he inherited a house and land in Bantry Bay.

Graduate of Balliol College Oxford and President Oxford Union 1952. Served as Dragoons Guardsman. Called to the Bar by Middle Temple in 1955 and became Vice-Chairman of his local Conservative Association in 1956. Member for Tunbridge Wells (a safe Kent seat) since 1974. Parliamentary Under Secretary, Employment 1979-81. Minister of State Home Office 1981-83 where he steered through the Criminal Justice Act 1982. Appointed Solicitor General and knighted in June 1983.

Mayhew makes little secret of his doubts about the Anglo-Irish Agreement and believes that Unionists have genuine grievances. As Solicitor General he strongly opposed the introduction of three judge courts in N.I.

He recommended the prosecution of Clive Ponting in 1986 for his revelations about the Belgrano sinking.

6. Sir Nicholas Lyell QC, Solicitor General (48)

Was PPS to Michael Havers since his appointment as A.G. in 1979 until 1986 when he became Under Secretary in Department of Social Security. Like Havers, his father was a High Court judge and he came up the traditional Tory path of Stowe School, Oxford, Royal Artillery, the Bar and Lloyds. Grandson of Lowes Dalbiac Luard, a well-regarded Edwardian painter.

MP since 1979 and would be more on the high Tory reforming wing of the Party. Highly intelligent and could be A.G. by end of 1988 if Mayhew is promoted to the Cabinet.

New Minister of State at the NIO

John Stanley (45)

Stanley was No. 2 in the Ministry of Defence 1983-87 as Minister of State for the Armed Forces - responsible for the size and shape of the three services, for arms control and for operational matters. He has had a high profile especially during Falklands War. Subject of controversy before Select Committee in 1985 regarding rules of engagement for the sinking of the Belgrano which MP's had been wrongly led to believe were issued before the sinking.

1979-83 Minister for Housing and Construction where he spearheaded purchase of houses by council tenants.

1976-79 Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mrs Thatcher where he first earned her confidence.

February 1974 first elected to Commons for Tonbridge and Malling in Kent. Previously worked for RIO Tinto Zinc, Institute for Strategic Studies and Conservative Research Department.

Born 19 January 1942, he graduated from Lincoln College Oxford. Married Susan Giles, 2 sons, 1 daughter. Has reputation for arrogance and aloofness which some attribute to his shy and workaholic nature. Considered to be independent-minded and not one to take dictation from his staff either in the MOD or the Military.

He does not take alcohol and bans smoking from his office and car.

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