



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

*Please copy urgently to  
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M) 19/6/88*

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Immediate

Secret - By Special Bag

9 June, 1988.

Mr. Noel Dorr,  
Secretary,  
Department of Foreign Affairs.

*19/6  
by Mr. Confly  
hrn  
13.6.88*

Conversation with John Weston, Cabinet Office

*Brian,  
Please  
to Noel  
FIA this  
NO 5 - 28/7/88  
pb*

Dear Secretary,

During lunch with John Weston the conversation turned easily to a discussion on the current state of Anglo-Irish relations. After some short discussion on Fair Employment and the aid programme for West Belfast, Weston said that the main problem which both sides face at the moment is the lack of confidence at the top. He said that he could not overstate the seriousness of this. It was most clearly manifested during the recent visit of Nichols Fenn to London. He referred to the efforts of Sir Robin Butler, himself and others to hold the line but said that they are not able to overcome the Prime Minister's sense of disillusionment.

He emphasised the importance of turning the situation around and in this context mentioned the expected reply from the Taoiseach to the Prime Minister's letter. Weston referred to the Prime Minister's disappointment at what she sees as a lack of delivery on security cooperation on the Irish side. I suggested to Weston that the Prime Minister's hopes were unrealistic if she had expected that the IRA problem would disappear overnight after the Anglo-Irish Agreement came into force. I also suggested that the IRA could not be defeated by security measures alone. Having said this, I then went into some detail on the efforts made by the present Irish Government in the security area.

Weston said that he could fully accept all that I had said but he said he must add in the same breath that "she does not". He said also that it is accepted that the Agreement is broader than its security aspects and that each side may have its priorities but, even taking that into account, the Prime Minister viewed the achievements in the security area as falling far short of what she had hoped for. He mentioned tentatively the issue of the questioning of suspects by the RUC while in Garda custody as an area for possible progress. I responded by stating a personal view that this would be an extremely difficult issue for the Irish Government. I said that it is necessary also to be aware of the Taoiseach's difficulties.

Weston spoke of the Prime Minister's unhappiness that no explicit condemnation of violence figured in the Taoiseach's speeches in the United States. I made the point that the speeches were aimed at a particular audience and not everything was restated in them. I said that the Taoiseach's position on all violence is quite clear and suggested that it is unreasonable to imply that the position is somehow put in doubt if the position is not restated on certain occasions. I mentioned the recent Parliamentary Question regarding possible talks with Provisional Sinn Fein and the Taoiseach's clear indication that a renunciation of violence by the other side would be a necessary prerequisite for any talks.

When the question of a reply from the Taoiseach to the Prime Minister's letter arose again, I asked Weston whether he thought a letter setting out the facts as seen from the Irish side would have any chance of solving the problem in view of the Prime Minister's personal and clearly different views on the state of affairs. At that stage Weston said that he is convinced that a substantive meeting between the Prime Minister and Taoiseach is necessary. He suggested that "all we officials can do is light the fuses and leave them to it". He said that from a tactical point of view it would be good if the Taoiseach were in a position at a meeting to produce something concrete which would surprise the Prime Minister.

He thought that something like this is necessary to turn her around from her present frame of mind. Weston favours provision being made at Hanover for at least one hour's substantive discussion.

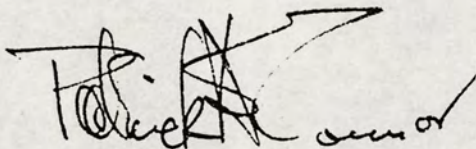
In passing, Weston drew a distinction between his hopes for a substantive meeting in Hanover and the question of a possible Summit on the occasion of the review of the operation of the Anglo-Irish Conference. While he would not entirely exclude the possibility of a Summit in the Autumn, he clearly sees it at this stage as being unlikely.

Weston indicated that he is looking forward to the 'dining club' get-together on Friday. I formed the impression that he will participate in it more often than will Sir Robin Butler.

Weston said that both he and Sir Robin plan to attend the BIA Conference at Ditchley but Sir Robin will have to leave before the end.

I am reporting separately on other matters which we discussed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick O'Connor', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Patrick O'Connor,  
Minister Plenipotentiary.