



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2018/68/42
Creation Dates:	22 April 1988
Extent and medium:	5 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

NOT FOR PUBLICATION, BRO. ... OF US
... TAPES BEFORE 2000 HOURS.
ON Friday 22 April 1988

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS

**EXTRACT FROM A SPEECH BY THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH
SECRETARY, SIR GEOFFREY HOWE QC MP IN DERBYSHIRE, 22 APRIL**

One of the darkest weeks in the troubled history of Northern Ireland is just one month behind us. The murderous tragedies at Milltown and Andersonstown were terrible shocks to us all. They showed human nature at its most irrational and savage.

It is not surprising that many people's first reaction was one of deep despair. But despair is no solution to anything.

The subsequent meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference showed how clearly both governments saw the need to rise above such appalling events and the difficult months which had preceded them, and to look, yet again, to our future together. In a speech yesterday in the United States, Mr Haughey offered his view of the events of the last few months. He spoke, as it happens, just as I had been planning to make my own contribution to this continuing debate which is of such importance to us all.

Britain and Ireland cannot escape the ties which bind us together: geography, family links, our common language, our common legal traditions, our commitment to Christian values, our shared experience in the European Community. Two countries with so much in common, two communities in the same island, cannot leave each other to go on lurching from one grisly tragedy to the next.

Whether some of us like it or not, we share these islands. They are our home. We cannot treat each other as strangers, as foreigners. Two civilised peoples must be able to learn from the tragedies of their common history, and so to find

ways of living peacefully together. If France and Germany can do it, then why not us? That is the perception which inspired all those who worked to produce the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Even so, the road to Hillsborough was not an easy one. But two outstanding patriotic leaders, Margaret Thatcher and Garret Fitzgerald, were determined to find a way to work more closely together to tackle the challenge of violence, and to provide a democratic and peaceful means for the pursuit of competing views of Northern Ireland's future - both the views of those who wished to change its constitutional position, and those who wished to maintain the status quo.

The way forward from Hillsborough was bound to be strewn with rocks as well.

The Agreement has come through a General Election on both sides of the Irish Sea - and indeed derived new strength from its acceptance by a new Irish Government, led by another outstanding patriot, Charles Haughey. It is essential to the interests of Ireland, North and South, that both sides continue to hold fast to the objectives and obligations of the Agreement.

More recently, Northern Ireland politicians have indeed been turning their attention to political options, talks about how to find a way of living together peacefully in the province. It is too soon to judge the significance of this change of focus, but it is clear that real leadership will be required in both communities if there is to be progress.

Her Majesty's Government remains ready, as Tom King has always made clear, to consider all creative proposals which can command widespread support, and which recognise the international dimensions of the problem. What we will not do is respond to threats, violence or terrorism.

1705-04-22 12:10 R12 P00 LONDON

But it was too much to hope that there would be no setbacks. We have had to live through a few undoubtedly difficult months in Anglo-Irish relations. They have been months of the kind with which the Anglo-Irish Agreement was designed to deal. And it has withstood the strain. We are still talking to each other. Let us keep it like that.

We have to start from the fact that it is terrorism which has lain at the root of all our most recent problems. It is the most urgent problem that we have to tackle together.

When faced with terrorism the security forces, the courts, and the governments of both countries have hard choices to make. Their decisions are open to challenge, debate and appeal. Not so those of the terrorists. They act as self-appointed judges, jury and executioners. There is no Court of Appeal from their verdicts, no reprieve from their sentences.

The security forces are not above the law. The soldier at Achnacloy faces the prospect of trial for his actions. The shooting of three IRA terrorists in Gibraltar is the subject of a public inquest. The Courts have exhaustively considered the case of the Birmingham Six. And so on. I agree with Charles Haughey when he says that the State must always uphold the law.

Our response to terrorism is governed by law, not political convenience. We must keep it that way. In both jurisdictions, the Courts are our defence against "justice" by administrative or diplomatic convenience - and against trial by press and public opinion. That is only one reason - but an important one - why our two legal systems need to increase confidence in each other.

By stressing the priority of our joint fight against terrorism, I do not mean to belittle the long-standing historic grievances on the Irish side. I do not underestimate the hurt felt by the Irish in recent months. I know that many of them believe that the English are insensitive and do not understand them. As a Welshman I can easily follow the argument, though I am unwilling to endorse it.

So let me make it clear that for our part any hurt is not intentional. It is not calculated. There is no conspiracy.

But let me make it clear too that there is no monopoly of grievance. I try hard to see these problems through Irish as well as through British eyes. Let me ask the Irish to look too through British eyes.

We are faced by ruthless men and women of violence who are trying to kill us. There is no doubt of their evil design, of their "malice aforethought". My colleagues in government share memories of Brighton that are a constant reminder of that inescapable fact.

And we are reminded too of the far greater suffering of the people of Northern Ireland itself. Year in, year out, they bear the brunt of the violence. Above all in the security forces. We owe it to all of them, to nationalists and unionists alike, to work together - throughout Ireland - to put an end to this scourge.

Terrorism and violence pose a threat to both the British and the Irish state. And when I hear or read things (by no means only from the Republic) which show equivocation towards terrorism and violence, I am dismayed.

Neither government can escape their responsibility to tackle these very difficult problems. Of course there are differences in perception. Not everyone will agree with all our decisions. But we must go on learning how to act together in good faith and in common self-defence against violence.

So what is there to do? A great deal:

- we must develop a dedicated and uncompromising alliance against the terrorist. Despite recent strains, cooperation has improved. We welcome recent Irish successes since the capture of the "Eksund". But we cannot relax. There is a long way still to go;

-we must get extradition working properly. The Irish legislation was most unwelcome to us: we felt let down. But Mr Haughey has himself said that effective extradition is essential. We are ready to operate the Irish legislation in good faith. But there are genuine difficulties, and to resolve them we need Irish help;

-we must go on tackling the historic challenges of a divided society too. We have put forward proposals on fair employment, which will be translated into legislation. There are proposals for discussion on education. We welcome Irish views. Both communities must feel they have a stake in Northern Ireland;

- I return finally to the commitment in the Anglo-Irish Agreement to reconciliation and peace. I reaffirm that, and our determination to uphold the principle, implicit in Article 1, that the future of Northern Ireland should be decided by the democratic choice of a majority of the people there.