



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2018/68/50
<b>Creation Dates:</b>	4 June 1988
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	5 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

AMBASÁID NA HÉIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

*nos 86*

17 Grosvenor Place,  
SW1X 7HR.

*✓*  
*9/16*

*cc Mr Nally  
PCC  
Councillor A1  
Mr Blackmore / Mr Ross  
JSC*

Confidential - By Courier Service.

4 June, 1988.

Dear Assistant Secretary,

Dinner with Ken Maginnis, M.P.

1. As previously reported, this meeting resulted from an urging by Barry Porter that Maginnis should agree to at least hear first hand the case in favour of the Anglo-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body. Maginnis rang last week and agreed to come to London for dinner. He was very strong on the point that we should not be seen by any journalists or other Members of Parliament. He was friendly at a personal level, if a bit stiff at the beginning. He relaxed after a while, however, and over four hours we had a positive conversation which, even if nothing else had come out of it, established a good basis for ongoing contact.
2. He made it clear that he was not meeting me in the context of recent speculation about a dialogue between the Taoiseach and Unionists. I made it clear for my part that it could not have been otherwise, and that the starting point was



an invitation from him to me to brief him on the Inter-Parliamentary Body. I judged that, whatever Jim Molyneaux may be considering vis-a-vis Dublin, Maginnis does not seem to be fully engaged with his leader on it.

3. Several times during the course of the discussion, Maginnis was rather offhand toward Molyneaux in one way or another. He was critical of Molyneaux's failure, as he saw it, to lead with firmness and imagination. He thought that Molyneaux was getting weaker and is unlikely to deliver anything serious at this stage. His own interest in the leadership of the party was evident several times although he usually prefaced his remarks with phrases like "I don't know what they'll decide ...." or "they may not want me, but ...." He was strongly critical of John Taylor who, I felt, he saw as a dangerous contender. He saw Martin Smyth in a friendly light, but wondered whether he could be a leader. He said McCusker is quite ill, and no sure guesses could be made about his future in politics. I probed him several times on when the leadership question may be expected to come up, but he did not have a hard answer.
  
4. A large section of the discussion was taken up by an exposé on my part of the Government's perspectives at the present time. Out of his comments on all this, I felt that Maginnis knows quite clearly that there is no turning back the clock and that any future moves of significance must involve the Republic: he may not like it, but the island of Ireland dimension is something he knows he cannot make go away. In a blunt way, he recognized the Taoiseach as a force to be reckoned with for quite some time to come. He thought that the Taoiseach would not do business with the Unionists unless it moved the British some distance out and the Republic some distance in. What vehemence he brought to the discussion was, however, almost entirely reserved for



the Agreement. He was red-faced and loud about it. His constituency has sustained more murder than any other. His friends and acquaintances have been killed. Still, he said, he has been hurt more by the Agreement than by their deaths. It is a poison and a cancer in his system. He was so strong on this that expressions of simple, incredulity hardly served the moment. I tried to probe the elements of the offence. It became slowly clear that (i) lack of consultation during the neegotiation, (ii) full consultation, as he saw it, of the SDLP with London's knowledge, and (iii) lack of concern about presentation of it to the Unionist side, were three main elements for him. It also became clear that Maginnis, like other Unionists talked to, does not blame Dublin for what has happened; indeed, he said that in Dublin's place he would have done the same thing. It was for London that he reserved his feelings of betrayal. The Unionist people, he said, have been lied to and betrayed by the British. Their fate is now in their own hands.

5. We argued back and forth, and I brought him back several times to the absence of any threat to the Unionist identity from the Republic, and to the Republic's commitment against terrorism. He listened courteously to all this. Throughout the evening there was a marked difference between the Maginnis who listened and exchanged views reasonably and the Maginnis who from time to time turned on a sort of internal, pre-set speech machine which delivered wedges of heart-felt apocalypse. The latter would erupt and blow over without warning and, it seemed, without doing damage to the more reasonable level of his conversation.
6. The main point he wanted to discuss was the possibility of our Government agreeing to internment in the Republic if the British Government were to do it in the North. He conducted a kind of cross-examination to find out whether something was going on behind the scenes.



I argued that internment had not worked in the past, and wondered whether it was suited to the Irish context. He agreed quite emphatically that it had not worked last time. He said they took in too many, got a lot of names wrong, and missed a lot of big fish. Now, he said, they know exactly which small select group to take in and this, he said, goes for the South too. If we were to agree to internment, he said, the relationship between the Unionist people and the Republic would be transformed.

I reiterated strongly the Government's commitment in principle and practise to security co-operation and to strong anti-terrorist measures. I argued that internment could provide a narrow focus of resistance for the IRA and a strong basis for recruitment for the young. However, he said he wanted to leave with us his strong view that it would be effective in itself and would transform the Unionist-Dublin relationship. [Note: this was the single major point that Maginnis brought in a determined way to the conversation. Insofar as there was any element of a message in the evening, this was it. I believe I left him, however, with no sense that I would hie to Dublin with the point. Rather, I tried to leave him with the impression that, as far as I was concerned, it was one of a number of points covered over a long evening in an off-the-record conversation.]

7. Footnote

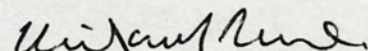
It is difficult to report the conversation in any clearer way: most of it consisted of lengthy attempts to respond in a reasoned and reassuring way to the kind of rhetoric with which we are familiar. For what it is worth, Maginnis said several times, toward the end, that he found a lot of this to be genuinely meant and honest. There is no doubt, though,



that he is stuck in a narrow rut and lacks the ability to get easily out of it.

When I dropped him home, he said he was glad that we had met. He asked if he could contact me again on the same basis and I agreed with some expressions of personal warmth.

Yours sincerely,

  
Richard Ryan,  
Minister-Cousellor.

Mr. Dermot. A. Gallagher,  
Assistant Secretary,  
Anglo-Irish Division,  
Department of Foreign Affairs.