



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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*Personal  
N & J*

Oifig an Taoisigh  
Office of the Taoiseach

22 February, 1987.

The Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, M.P., F.R.S.,  
Prime Minister,  
10, Downing Street,  
London.

Personal and Private

When we last met in December I indicated to you that I thought it likely that there would be an election in January leading in all probability to a change of Government.

I was concerned then to convey to you my conviction that such a change would not affect Irish Government policy in relation to the Agreement. That was, and remains, my conviction. Both the national interest of this State, and also narrower political interests, deriving from the very strong support the Agreement enjoys amongst our people, point strongly towards such a conclusion.

There was one danger I then foresaw: that a new Government might find it politically impossible, vis-a-vis a section of its own supporters, to enact an Extradition Bill along the lines necessary to enable us to give full effect to our commitments in the Hillsborough Communique, in response to early implementation on your side of the commitments you had entered into in that document. It was for that reason that, even without a Dail majority, I pushed through the Dail, and Seanad, the Extradition Bill in December, and made provision for it to come into effect next December unless a motion to the contrary were passed by the Dail and Seanad.

I believed that this arrangement would give time for a new Government here to find in the further implementation of the Agreement on your side during 1987 grounds to justify, even to some of its own more extreme supporters, the taking of no action to postpone the implementation of the Act in December next.

I believe that this view has so far been, and will be, justified by events, although clearly deft diplomatic footwork on both sides including some positive reaction on your side to proposals currently under discussion, will be required to keep things on course - and it will, I believe, be essential that in the Autumn of this year your side

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take some significant further initiatives in regard to the administration of justice in Northern Ireland in order to assist the new Irish Government to resist pressures that will then emerge to postpone implementation of the Act.

I regret that because of events here we shall not be able together to carry forward the great work that we initiated, which has opened a totally new, and I would hope, irreversible phase in Anglo-Irish relations, and has provided the groundwork for the achievement of peace and stability in Northern Ireland. I regret it all the more because I believe I can detect now the first stirrings of movement in the North, amongst the bewildered and unhappy unionist community who have naturally found it hard to face long-postponed realities. And on the nationalist side there is not only solid support for the Agreement amongst the vast majority, but signs also, I think, that some in the I.R.A. are beginning to face the realisation that their effort to achieve change by violence is now doomed. Their 1.8% vote in our General Election has further assisted this process.

Several years will no doubt elapse before these early signs of the Agreement's intended effects bear their full fruits, but I am more than ever convinced now as I leave office that in the action we took together, aided by our Ministers and by some extraordinarily able and dedicated civil servants on both sides, our instinct, yours and mine, was right, and our judgement sound.

I would only add two points - on a purely personal note. It is not for me to comment on the domestic politics of Britain, but I think I am entitled to say that for Ireland's sake I hope you are returned to power. The other is that I very much hope our paths will cross again. The relationship which began when we stepped on board that motor launch in Cesme twelve years ago - and when you got soaked because of my Irish optimism about the behaviour of the Turkish sea! - has I believe been extraordinarily fruitful for both our countries, and our encounters have always been stimulating - whether calm, as they usually were, or heated, as they sometimes momentarily became!

With all good wishes for the future.