



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2017/10/61
Creation Dates:	13 January 1987
Extent and medium:	3 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.

AMBASÁD NA hÉIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

RECEIVED
ANGLO-IRISH SECTION
Time 16.00 Date 16.1.

17 Grosvenor Place
SWIX 7HR

CONFIDENTIAL - BY COURIER SERVICE

S22628
F. [unclear] xPA.

13 January 1987

*Minter
Secretary
A-1. Section
A-1 Secretariat
Box*

24404
22628

Dear Assistant Secretary

Lunch with Ian Gow, M.P.

Gow is very depressed. He is, he said, getting absolutely nowhere with his Unionist clients and is convinced that while the present leadership is "hopeless", there are no signs whatsoever of any figures of stature in the wings. There will in his view be no movement at all from the Unionists until after general elections in both the Republic and in Britain. Interestingly, he said he is now convinced that no conceivable political changes in either the Republic or in Britain will produce any change that would favour the Unionists. He believes that the Republic will stand over the Agreement and that the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberals and the SDP, in any conceivable combination due to a hung Parliament (itself very unlikely in his view) will give the Unionists an axis.

He has had, he said, several "good" meetings with the Prime Minister. His conclusion from these is that the Agreement is here to stay and that despite his rehearsing his belief that she (like the Taoiseach and their two Governments) were taken aback by the extent and duration of Unionist opposition, she is implacably committed to it.

He accepts that he is at rather a crossroads and in this context I introduced the thought that he has been rejected by the Unionists; that his gesture at great price to himself has been spurned; and that after the next election he should think seriously of coming on board again. Curiously, at this very point, Sir Geoffrey Howe

.../

came past our table and was very friendly indeed toward Gow. He was visibly warmed by this and, when Howe passed on, he wondered whether he would be offered a job after the next election. I said that, whatever about the waves he has created by resigning, he is generally thought to have been honourable and helpful in his repeated denunciation of Paisley, Robinson etc. and his efforts to get the Unionists back into Westminster.

He said that he was very angry at Molyneaux slipping off the hook when we tried to set up a meeting with the Taoiseach recently. He said Molyneaux just "chickened out", and that his excuse, that he would not be re-selected if he had been caught, was absolutely unacceptable; that he, Gow, if given such - or any - marching orders by his constituency, "would tell them to go to hell". He has no spark of hope left that he can get Molyneaux, or any of the others, to show any courage and leadership. "They are all awful", he said.

At this point we were joined by the Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers, who stayed for an hour (and that ended the personal conversation with Gow). Havers said that when he came out of the anaesthetic after his heart operation (his wife and the surgeons were there) he immediately shouted "We must kill Paisley!". He cannot explain it, he said, but "wouldn't it confirm everything Paisley accuses us of?".

Havers believes the next election will not be until about March 1988. How otherwise, he asked, could she explain going early to the country when she has such a large majority?

As to himself, he wants the succession to be carefully prepared. He does not, he said, want two new law officers coming in cold to such a delicate job, and he cited Anglo-Irish questions as an example of how difficult and delicate the job can be. At this point Gow made what could only be described as a nakedly crude case for Patrick Mayhew as Havers' successor. He battered away at Havers for about ten minutes and pressed Havers to bring Mayhew's merits home to the Prime Minister. Havers took the view that Mayhew would

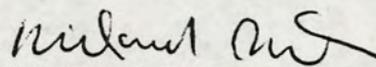
.../

be a very good Attorney General, and his own choice, but that surely Mayhew wants something else: to be Northern Ireland Secretary. Gow thought that Mayhew would be a "marvellous.....wonderful" Northern Ireland Secretary, but that there are "so many important things that the Attorney General must protect", for which he urged consideration of Mayhew. (Reading between the lines - or words - here, there seemed little doubt, and Havers seemed quite aware of this too (he said "Mayhew is of course from a complex Irish background, eh Ian?"), that Gow was egging on Mayhew as someone who in a post-Hailsham world would defend Hailsham's present position on three-man courts and such issues.)

Gow went out for a couple of minutes, and Havers asked "what are we going to do with old Gow?". I suggested a job for Gow after the next election and he said immediately "Absolutely right! We must give him a job - Minister of State, at least, somewhere." He went on to say, just before Gow returned, that it is very important to get Gow back into the fold, and that he would intend to take this up: he stressed how fond they are of Gow (and of his wife, Jane, who is apparently very distressed by what is happening to him) and how they must "get him out of this nonsense."

Gow returned and the conversation continued, but Irish matters did not arise again. When we parted, Gow said he was glad to have a further conversation, even if it had been abbreviated in this way; and he suggested that we meet again soon. We agreed on this.

Yours sincerely


Richard Ryan
Counsellor