



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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AMBASÁID NA HÉIREANN, LONDAIN.



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

1 November, 1988.

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Mr. Dermot Gallagher,  
Assistant Secretary,  
Department of Foreign Affairs,  
Dublin.

Dear Assistant Secretary,

Lunch with Charles Powell, Private Secretary to Mrs. Thatcher

Powell enquired immediately about the Taoiseach's health. All at Number 10, he said, very much hoped that he was coming out of his illness and was able to return to work fully recovered. He also expressed strong satisfaction on seeing reports that the Tanaiste is much better and is fully engaged again in the Conference process. British Ministers, he said, "have very great respect for Brian Lenihan" and see him as "very valuable in the Agreement's working". Reports indicate, he said, that the Irish Government is presently in a position to choose the moment to consolidate its position. When the Taoiseach and the Tanaiste are "fighting fit", he assumed, he said, that "we can cock our ears for the off."

He was very praising of our Government's economic performance and observed that, viewed from London in the context of Anglo-Irish political relations, Ireland's strengthening economic position "is very good news." He observed that, while they are well aware that the Taoiseach's "hand and stamp" are felt in all major policy areas, reports indicate that Ray McSharry has done a great deal to turning the economy round. "If rumours are correct and he is off to the deep sugar", said Powell, "he will we hear be quite a loss."

He asked about our reaction to their recent right to silence and broadcasting measures. I went through them with him, saying basically that

- On the right to silence measure, there was a clear down side (which I elaborated), as British commentators have pointed out; in the Agreement context it has clear implications for minority confidence in the administration of justice; we were quite irritated at the lack of prior consultation - we had been requesting this since last August;
- On broadcasting restrictions, there is a fundamental difference between the Republic, where Sinn Fein polls less than 2%, and the North, where Sinn Fein polls 30% of the nationalist vote, etc.;

*Handwritten notes:*  
- he is coming back in  
- 4.11.88  
- 2/11

*Handwritten initials:* MAS

17 Grosvenor Place,  
London SW1X 7HR.

*Handwritten notes:*  
cc P.S. Taoiseach  
P.S. 1  
Mr. Doherty; P.S.  
Mr. Matthews / Mr. Shanahan  
(2) Charles P.  
J.P.

- Overall, the hype clearly far outweighed any possible usefulness and, in Northern Ireland, must have shown people that there are not many shots in 'HMG's locker; I argued that those against whom the measures were intended would laugh them off with derision.

Powell said he was not entirely surprised by those reactions. He said that on their side (he clearly meant Mrs. Thatcher) there was "a feeling of outrage that following the worst sort of atrocities these monsters could stand up and affect the language and manner of Parliamentary democracy. It just wasn't on!" The broadcasting measure may not be very effective in the fight against the IRA but, he said, there are very many in Britain who believe strongly that the IRA should be put off the air. "For heaven's sake", he said, "they are very small measures, but, believe me, it was felt that something had to be done".

He was, he said, very surprised at my complaint about lack of prior consultation. Although he drew a distinction between prior consultation and prior notification, he "had understood that all that had been sorted out." He asked how soon beforehand we had in fact been notified and agreed that the previous day did not constitute a reasonable period, particularly in view of our having raised it more than two months ago.

He asked about our reaction to the Winchester verdict and whether it was likely to put pressure on our Government to react to it. Before I replied, he went on to strongly defend it. He said that the judgement and the sentence reflected a widening view in Britain that the country had to defend itself in a resolute way against terrorism. The three struck him, however, as not fitting into the usual category of Irish terrorists; rather, they seemed to resemble the Baader-Meinhof category of disaffected, well-educated, middle class young people who want to poison their parents' world. He understood that one of them may have had direct IRA links but that the other two may have been trying to impress the IRA.

I said that there had indeed been a wave of public and political feeling in response particularly to the severity of the sentences : if they had actually killed Tom King the sentences could only have been made more severe by being life with a specific recommendation as opposed to 25 years. There was, I said, a feeling also that the fact of the defendants being Irish had drawn down a harder judgement. I hoped, I said, that in the circumstances the Government's efforts avoid Anglo-Irish difficulties were seen in London. He said that this was indeed so and he would want this to be clear to us. He felt, however, that he could not accept my point about the fact that they had failed to kill King being a potential argument for mitigation of the sentence. In his view, shared he felt by most people and the judiciary in Britain, the intention and desire to kill King made them as guilty as if they had killed him.

// Overall, he feels that there has been a return to "something closer to normality" in Anglo-Irish relations in recent weeks. He would not, however, he said, presume to think that such a state of affairs can be expected to continue for ever. He said he believed, however, that the written exchanges between Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Haughey have had a positive effect on her; he hoped that this feeling was shared in Dublin. They owe us a letter at this point, he said, and he would see that it was done shortly. I said that this was something outside the normal channels but that I was glad to hear his view that it was having a positive effect on Mrs.

Thatcher. He said that, as for himself, he does not know how, but he seems to have "a calming effect" on her : he wishes he had the same effect on his wife.

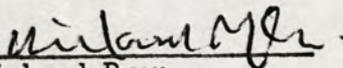
He said he believes that their Government is heading into "difficult weather" over the next year or so. The past year has been "a cake walk" for her and her Government and she has been able to swan around the world without having to worry about the domestic scene. However, he thinks the economic situation looks quite bad and that there will be a public and parliamentary response to a worsening climate in the teeth of all the Thatcherite doctrine of recent years. They are, he said, about to embark on a new round of foreign visits (beginning with Poland on Wednesday), but he forecasts that she won't be doing much travel at all a year from now.

He turned back for a moment to Northern Ireland. He said that Mrs. Thatcher and he were both "very much struck" by one thing during their recent visit there : although the politicians refused to meet her, there was a distinct warmth in the responses of ordinary people whom she met, both Protestant and Catholic. They are, he said, very slow to draw broad or general conclusions about changes of heart in Northern Ireland. However, it did seem to them that a perceptible dichotomy is emerging between the political leadership and the ordinary people whom they met on the loyalist side. They would not, of course, draw that conclusion on the nationalist side, but they were taken by the warm response by a group, which certainly included nationalists, in a factory in Derry.

I also briefed Powell on the most recent developments regarding the Inter-Parliamentary Body project (Peter Temple-Morris's visit to Dublin, the joint paper; movement by the Commons Clerks under John Wakeham's instruction; likely timing; modalities of the Body; etc.). He heard this out with interest and again expressed the view that, carefully handled, it was all to the good. Insofar as Mrs. Thatcher's goodwill was involved - and it was - he thought that there would not be a problem if we kept on the same tack that I had outlined to him, and if we did not ask her to do something : "let it happen around her".

We agreed to meet again in December.

Yours sincerely,

  
Richard Ryan  
Minister-Counsellor