



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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NO 18

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*Handwritten signature*

cc PSS  
M Nally  
M McHewer / M Byrne  
SA Munnery  
Councillor Al  
Fox

18 May 1988

*Handwritten notes:*  
Mr Mc Carthy  
24/5  
24.5.88

*Handwritten notes:*  
Mr [unclear]  
Mr [unclear]

Dear Assistant Secretary

CONVERSATION WITH CARDINAL HUME RE GUILDFORD FOUR, YOUR LETTER OF 10 MAY

I called on the Cardinal today. I should first of all report that Robert Kee, with whom I spoke last week, does not believe that the case will be referred back to the Court of Appeal. The prisoners themselves (two of whom have recently been visited by Mr O'Reilly) and their relations, are also very pessimistic. This pessimism is based on what the family have been saying about their contacts with the Sharples team and also on what the Birmingham Six result reveals of the attitude of the legal establishment.

I gave the Cardinal this background and told him of the Government's continuing concern and interest and their intention, set out in the Tanaiste's statement of 14 April, to establish contact with the Home Secretary regarding the Birmingham Six and this case. I asked him for his assessment.

The Cardinal and his friends (Scarman, Devlin, Biggs-Davison) are also pessimistic. They have in fact drafted a statement, on the assumption that the decision will be negative. This will say that they do not wish to offer immediate comments in any detail, and will state their concern that the law should be seen to operate fairly. They do, however, intend to continue the campaign and (in the event of a negative decision) will consider their next moves carefully. These might include action in Parliament or publicising the case they have presented and the new evidence which has been submitted for examination by the police.

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In the (unlikely) event of a positive decision, they would of course take account of the sub judice rules.

The Cardinal said he believes that the key to proving the innocence of the Four lies in the case against Carol Richardson, in particular her alibis and the new evidence of Maura Kelly who says she was with Richardson on the afternoon in question. It was also an essential part of their case the Cardinal said that not only the new evidence but also the original evidence should be reconsidered. He had emphasised this to Sharples and to the Home Secretary. (The Cardinal told me he has a very large file on the case and said that he needs constantly to refer to it in order to remember the detail. He excused himself for any lapses of memory in speaking with me in a general way about the case).

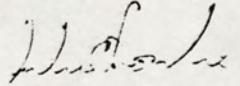
On the tactics of pursuing the case, the Cardinal said that the basic line he and his friends were following is that the convictions are unsafe; while he has always been convinced the Four (and the Maguires) are innocent he believes it right to avoid saying this publicly. He believes it would be quite wrong and indeed counter-productive to take a strident line and he has urged supporters of the Four through Fr Bobby Gilmore to avoid polemics. He was appalled to hear of Errol Smalley's approaches to the Soviet and Czech Embassies and hoped that this would not wreck the campaign. So far as his own efforts were concerned, he thought it essential that he avoid the politics of the case - he had made it clear to the Home Secretary that for him it is a question of justice and that he would take the same line if Chinese, rather than Irish people, were involved.

In summary, the Cardinal remains convinced that the original case does not hold together and is in fact unbelievable when the alleged

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movements of the Four in connection with the bombings are considered. His pessimism relates to the difficulty of getting the legal system to alter decisions already taken.

Yours sincerely



Andrew O'Rourke  
Ambassador

Mr Dermot A Gallagher  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
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