



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/99/24

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.

AMBASAID NA hÉIREANN. LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY. LONDON

17. GROSVENOR PLACE.
SW1X 7HR

Telephone: 0171-235 2171

Direct Line: 0171-201 2

Fax: 0171-245 6961

Cops
M. McLoughlin
passed on to the
Taxisearch
[Signature]

(3)

(25)

12 November 1997

Mr. Dermot Gallagher
Second Secretary
Anglo Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin 2

14-11-97
11

PSM: PSMS: PSSG:
Messrs. Murray, Teahon,
Manergh & Dalton:
Ambassadors London &
Washington: Joint Secretary;
Counsellors A-I

Dear Secretary,

Conversations with the Queen and the Prince of Wales

Last night the Queen held her evening Reception for the Diplomatic Corps. This is an annual event to which about 1500 guests are invited including Ambassadors, High Commissioners, certain Embassy staff, members of the Royal Household, the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet, Party leaders and other figures in political life. Dress is formal, and guests are lined up in the many large and interconnecting reception rooms under the paintings in the Queen's collection, the chandeliers and gilded mirrors of Buckingham Palace. The Queen together with the Duke of Edinburgh and the Prince of Wales, wearing their Order of the Garter regalia, move through the rooms, preceded by a footman walking backwards and accompanied by various equerries and ladies in waiting. The Royal party are introduced separately to Heads of Mission, their spouses and staff and speak to them all. For the fortunate ones whose length of service in London places them towards the top of the precedence list the wait is no more than 45 minutes; those further down the list must stand an additional hour or more before they are released to the buffet dinner, the champagne and dancing. This year the music, played by a military band, included several Irish tunes including *The Rose of Tralee*. Despite the opening formality it is a convivial social occasion and an opportunity to meet and talk to senior political figures, although the scope for serious conversation is limited.

The Queen was in good form and, as in the past, was warm and friendly

towards Ireland. She had seen coverage of President McAleese's inauguration on television and heard accounts of it on the radio and remarked on the number of women candidates in the election and on the fact of Ireland's having elected two women Presidents in succession. She recalled Mary Robinson's official visit last year and said how much she was looking forward to her lunch with the High Commissioner on Thursday, to which we have also been invited. She appeared to be aware of the dimensions of the Human Rights job and spoke about the difficulties of promoting human rights in the contemporary world.

The Prince of Wales asked about the Belfast talks and professed some optimism about their development. He indicated that the restoration of the ceasefire and the opening of talks reopened opportunities, which I took to be a reference to the possibility of another visit. (The Prince has spoken to me a number of times of his wish to return, and last year on the same occasion he said how sorry he was that the ending of the ceasefire had resulted in the cancellation of a proposed visit to Galway and Cork). In the light of Wally Kirwan's recent discussion with the Taoiseach (and the indications given by us at the Pakenham/Kirwan meeting on Monday) I gave a positive indication to the Prince about the possibility of another visit, which he noted.

On leaving the Palace one of the elderly footmen, dressed in a red cloak and white hat, bade us good night saying "Oiche mhaith. Slan agus beannacht".

Conversation with Paddy Ashdown

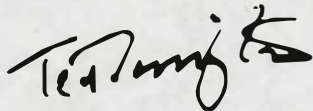
The Reception was preceded by small private dinner in Kensington Palace which was attended by the Queen's Private Secretary, the Permanent Under Secretary to the Treasury (Terry Burns), Paddy Ashdown and some other members of the Royal Household. Burns went over much the same ground on monetary policy as the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, at lunch yesterday on which I have reported separately.

Ashdown asked for and I gave him a briefing on the current state of the talks process. He said that he has had quite negative reports on progress and the prospects for a settlement from both Trimble and Alderdice and I gave him a more positive analysis. In particular I asked him to encourage the Unionists to begin to think about areas of compromise along the lines of the Framework Document. I also took the opportunity to emphasise the importance of confidence building measures, including prisoners issues and Bloody Sunday. He was doubtful about the latter (too much looking back in Northern Ireland,

3

what's the point of raising old issues) so I briefed him on the defects in the Widgery Report, the human dimension to the issue and its significance for the nationalist community. He remained sceptical, an indication, I feel, of attitudes here(even from people who are normally well disposed), that may have a bearing on the Government's examination - although in Ashdown's case we must bear in mind his own military background.

Yours sincerely,



Ted Barrington
Ambassador