

TELEGRAM RETRIEVED FROM DATABASE 15 February 99

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KEYDOC: FAREWELL TO DUBLIN 1995-1999 - RETIREMENT

CABINET OFFICE PLEASE PASS TO PS/No.10
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SUBJECT: KEYDOC: FAREWELL TO DUBLIN 1995-1999 - RETIREMENT
VALEDICTORY

SUMMARY

1. Four years of dramatic improvement in the bilateral relationship but much work remains if the British and Irish are to overcome historic tensions. The current close relationship gives grounds for hope of a better future based on the Good Friday Agreement.

DETAIL

2. My tour in Ireland has mostly coincided with an extraordinarily positive period in the history of our two countries. A newly successful Ireland has increasingly felt able to do the previously unthinkable: to have a normal relationship with its neighbour. This has been illustrated by a series of unprecedented high-profile events: the visit to Ireland of The Prince of Wales in 1995, the visit of President Robinson to Britain as Guest of Government in 1996, the meeting in public of the two Heads of State in November 1998, and the historic address by the Prime Minister to the Irish Parliament later that month.

3. Such symbolic events have been paralleled by real progress in overcoming the problems which have for long overshadowed the bilateral relationship. This process culminated last year in the Good Friday Agreement, and its overwhelming endorsement in referendums in Ireland, North and South. For the first time the two Governments, and the Northern parties, have agreed a mutually satisfactory compromise on how to achieve peaceful co-existence in the North: a momentous achievement. It was astonishing that Bertie Ahern, a Taoiseach from Fianna Fail, ('the Republican party'), could secure a 94.4 percent vote for the replacement of the territorial claim to the North with an aspiration of an eventual United Ireland.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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6. Nor have attitudes to Britain changed as much as the Irish like to claim. [REDACTED]

and of the possibility that not everything British is necessarily malign. A decade ago Fianna Fail Ministers would not even come to the British Ambassador's Residence here. Today they do.

[REDACTED]

7. But if the Irish are unwilling to face unpalatable truths, our own record is far from perfect. We may no longer patronise the Irish as we once did. But we can still come across as arrogant and self-righteous, and, above all, reluctant to accept blame for past errors, including an unfortunate string of miscarriages of justice. We - rightly - blame terrorists for the appalling carnage of the Troubles. But we find it hard to understand why there is a widespread belief in the Republic that Bloody Sunday was the principal trigger of the violence, because it was seen not only to prompt a surge in recruitment to the IRA by young nationalist men who could see no other way to make their voice heard, but also to give some legitimacy to violence. Our decision to set up a Commission to re-examine the evidence on this tragedy marks a major step forward. Initiatives of this kind on our part will not be easy, particularly when they involve issues where we clearly have a serious case to answer. But in the long run, our greater openness can only be mutually beneficial.

8. Against this background, can more be done to improve mutual understanding, and thus underpin the work now underway to implement the Good Friday Agreement? While the most urgent requirement is to establish the various bodies for which the Agreement provides, beyond that it is worth highlighting areas in all three Strands of the Agreement where increased attention could help to ensure that the settlement endures.

9. Looking first at Strand One, people in the Republic may have no responsibility for the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, but this does not prevent them from voicing their concerns. Their overriding preoccupation is to see parity of esteem for the nationalist community, above all by curbing the excesses of militant unionism. They believe that more support should be given to moderate Unionists and Orangemen, at the expense of the extremists, particularly those who use parades in a triumphalist manner. In a simplistic way, public opinion would like to see contentious parades banned. For the most part they accept that this is unrealistic, and that serious attempts are being made to improve the balance between the two communities. Nevertheless, it is not always easy to reply satisfactorily to those who ask why the British Government permit in Northern Ireland provocative marches which would be banned anywhere else in Britain. This is an area in which we shall never be able fully to meet Irish sensibilities. But at least we should avoid such situations as being seen by the Irish Government to present them with a *fait accompli* on the membership of the Parades Commission.

10. Turning to contacts between the two parts of Ireland, it is striking how few people in the Republic, especially those who aspire to a United Ireland, are prepared to take any initiative to get to know their Northern neighbours. Negotiations leading up to the Good Friday Agreement, and since, have been salutary in confronting Irish people in the South with the strength of the British allegiance of the Unionists. But all too often those who aspire to a United Ireland have little sense of just how much work is needed to convince Unionists of the desirability of Irish unification. I have tried to promote cross-border contacts, for instance among politicians and universities, and my efforts have been welcomed by those involved. These contacts, however, are not generally followed up by the participants. A more systematic approach to this issue, perhaps involving the Embassy and the Northern Ireland Office, could reap dividends.

11. The third idea covered by the Agreement, the East/West relationship, gives the greatest grounds for optimism. Here much work has already been done. The process intensified following the two General Elections last year. Mr Blair and Mr Ahern have set the example for a new kind of relationship based on regular, pragmatic contact. They have instructed their Ministers and officials to build up links with their opposite numbers. As a result, cooperation and understanding is now improving across the whole range of Government business, and particularly on education, employment, agriculture, policing, drugs, armed forces and, above all, EU issues. Exchanges involving not just London and Dublin, but other areas of the British Isles are also developing, as for instance between Irish and Gaelic speakers from Galway to Stornaway. Over time, especially if the British Irish Council is successfully launched, such developments may even help overcome one of the fundamental problems which has bedevilled the bilateral relationship - that of disparity of size - even if the new arrangements will bring fresh problems over, for example, relationships with the EU.

12. Nor should the contribution of the NGOs, and the effects of those who work patiently in the field of reconciliation, be underestimated. It is an area to which I have devoted particular attention, supporting both well-established bodies including Encounter, Cooperation Ireland and the Glencree Centre for Reconciliation, as well as more modest efforts such as those of the

two Warrington projects. That there is still a long way to go before people fully understand the hard work involved in achieving true reconciliation was, however, demonstrated when I ran a schools prize to promote friendship between British and Irish schools. With the exception the entrants interpreted friendship simply as the cessation of war between Ireland and Britain.

13. The evidence of recent developments in the East/West relationship is nevertheless encouraging. The overwhelming impression is that on both sides of the Irish Sea there is a will to secure genuine and lasting improvements, and that the efforts described above will expand significantly. As I leave Ireland, I am proud to have witnessed and contributed to the strides which have been made. The task has not always been easy, but I like to think that it was in recognition for my efforts in this direction that I was awarded an honorary LLD from Trinity College, Dublin just before Christmas.

ENVOI

14. Valedictory despatches on retirement normally include reflections on the changing nature of the Diplomatic Service. As a long-serving member of the Administration, and author of the Structural Review of 1992 which holds the seeds of so many of the current reforms, I do not propose to add a great deal to the voluminous papers on this subject.

15. My parting thought is one of sadness that the pride in their calling which was once found among Civil Servants has been eroded, in some places literally to the point of extinction. As a woman, I am often asked whether I would recommend the Diplomatic Service to young women. My reply has to be that I could not recommend any branch of the Civil Service with enthusiasm to anyone of either sex until there is evidence that we can somehow re-establish the mutual trust and respect which existed years ago between Ministers and their permanent staff.

16. There is, however, one experience I must record, as it is unique. In the 1980s it took great ingenuity on the part of Alex and myself to land a double posting in Abidjan. In 1987 he, in addition to becoming the UK Executive Director at the African Development Bank, became simultaneously the first (and currently only) male British Ambassador. Despite having now amassed seven years in that role, and in two very different posts, none of those who wish to encourage women into the higher reaches of the Service have asked about his experiences. Perhaps they - like Dublin - await the novel.

SUTHERLAND



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PART ONE OF TWO CORRECTED DIST

SUBJECT: IRELAND: VALEDICTORY

SUMMARY

1. Ireland a much changed country. Sinn Fiin seen in a new light following the years of ceasefire, leading to a breakthrough at the last general election. But Republicans continue to treat the Belfast Agreement as only a transitional phase. Ireland is now our fourth largest export market, despite economic downturn. While irritants such as Sellafield remain, the bilateral relationship is increasingly strong, with close cooperation on many key EU dossiers.

DETAIL


Like most countries in the modern world, Ireland has changed. To describe it, in Yeats' phrase, as changed utterly in recent times would be hyperbole. But in this case almost true. The Ireland I visited in the 1970s was not a comfortable place for a British diplomat. Venturing into rural pubs, we were as likely to encounter outright hostility as the fabled Irish welcome. But when I describe my life now to my predecessors, they cannot believe the way life has improved. Some, like Nicholas Fenn, were actively targeted by the IRA and Christopher Ewart-Biggs was not only targeted but eliminated. It is one of the endearing traits of the Irish that there are many people who still tell me how shocked and ashamed they were by the events of that day over a quarter of a century ago.

3.Ten years ago, having just returned from nearly 5 years in Spain, I visited Northern Ireland to talk to NIO officials about the terrorist group ETA and the Spanish government's reaction to it. At the time, ETA seemed to be on their last legs. The Spanish security authorities believed that the number of active members in their commandos were fewer than 30. At the same time our guesstimate of the scale of the Provisionals threat was around 900. And yet despite their strength, the IRA were already coming to accept that their aims could not be met by the Armalite, or indeed by a combination of the Armalite and the ballot box. The cold reality of this analysis led the IRA to the reluctant conclusion that they would have to achieve their aims through accepting the principle of consent. This was an enormous change in position by the Republicans and it is proper and right to acknowledge the extent of it. To those who had been brought up to regard the border and partition as a gerrymander of gargantuan proportions, it was a bitter pill to swallow.

4.We need, however, to remind ourselves that, although Sinn Fein signed up to the Belfast Agreement, not many Republicans see that as an end in itself. They see it as a transitional phase where the British government is being or should be dislodged from many of the parapets it has occupied. And it is in this context that we should see calls from the Republican movement for demilitarisation.

5.As the Prime Minister said in his "Acts of Completion" speech last October, the continuing existence of the IRA as an active paramilitary organisation is now the best card those whom republicans call "rejectionist" unionists, have in their hand. It is used as a justification of their refusal to share power; it embarrasses moderate unionism and pushes wavering unionists into the hands of those who would return Northern Ireland to the past. And because it also embarrasses the British and Irish Governments, it makes it harder for us to respond to nationalist concerns. The ambiguity with which the Republican movement handled the relationship between Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA may have helped oil the wheels of the peace process in the past but it has now become the grit which has brought its machinery to a grinding halt.

6.One of the paradoxes, however, of the peace process is that it has now in this part of the island become respectable again to be a republican nationalist. While the IRA were on the rampage, many people declined to cloak themselves in the tricolour and the wearing of the green.



7. Alongside a resurgent nationalism

, there has been a rising Irish self-confidence bred of the Celtic Tiger's seemingly inexhaustible stamina. Or so I would have written, had this valedictory been penned a year ago. Now the Celtic Tiger has run out of puff and while the Irish economy defied the laws of economic gravity for nearly a decade, the downturn in the world economy and increasingly high labour costs have finally taken their toll. This is of direct concern to us as, despite having a population of less than 4 million people, Ireland is our fourth largest export market, more than twice as large as Japan.

The days of double-digit growth may be over but we still want to maintain our market share here and take advantage of the huge infrastructure development plan, worth some #46 billion, which is due to be rolled out over the next four or five years.

What fundamentally

changed the way we looked at each other was our common membership of the European Community, whose fresh winds dispersed the dank claustrophobia which had so soured the relationship. EU membership has served to highlight the many areas where UK and Irish interests are similar; and we have developed the habit of working together. As a result, that inelegant word normalisation has become the strategic objective of the relationship. But what does normalisation mean for a practitioner? I have seen at first hand the development of the extremely warm and cordial personal chemistry between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. It is this which sets the tone for the bilateral relationship more broadly. Here are some practical examples:

The unveiling in 1998 by Her Majesty the Queen and President McAleese of the Memorial to those from throughout the island of Ireland who died in the First World War.

The exchanges of national day greetings between the two Heads of State which are now possible following the removal from the Irish Constitution of the territorial claim to Northern Ireland.

The visit by the Irish Guards to the Republic for the first time since Independence.

The address to both Houses of the Irish Parliament by Tony Blair.

ROBERTS

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PART TWO OF TWO

SUBJECT: IRELAND: VALEDICTORY

9. More recent events are equally noteworthy, including front page treatment given to the highly personal and poetic speech delivered by HRH Prince Charles at Glencree last year. I found it remarkable that the Irish Tricolour flew at half-mast over Government buildings, including the GPO in O'Connell Street, as President McAleese attended the funeral of the Queen Mother. And, bathetically, when I snatched a rare round golf at the K-Club recently, for the first time the Union flag was flown beside the Tricolour.

10. Barely a month goes by when a British warship, docked on the Liffey, dispenses entertainment to the guests of her Captain - events, once remarkable, but now so routine as to be barely worthy of comment. My Embassy is permanently deluged by UK visitors - indeed, I believe that we are now the most visited British Embassy in the world. Only last month the Northern Ireland Select Committee of the House of Commons visited Dublin and met Irish Parliamentarians at my Residence and at Leinster House. The Committee included senior members of the Ulster Unionist Party and the Deputy Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Peter Robinson. Not so long ago, this would have been a matter of great interest, if not controversy. It is the triumph of the routine which is so noteworthy.

11. Other aspects of normalisation are underscored by the new formal links between the British and Irish Governments, including the British Irish Council, at whose counsels the Foreign Office should be at the heart, not the periphery. The Belfast Agreement

states that the objective of the BIC is to promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands. The two governments, the devolved administrations and the representatives of the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are now busy tackling an agreed Programme of Work, the priority areas of which are Environment, Transport, Social Inclusion, Drugs and the Knowledge economy. Changes in the governance of the UK, and in particular the 'variable geometry' created by devolution, have helped this process.

12. There are subterranean trends too. One is closer co-operation on European issues. Not just in policy areas such as social security, tax, justice and home affairs and the Lisbon agenda of economic reform, but also in the Convention on the Future of Europe which is preparing the ground for the 2004 Intergovernmental Conference. British and Irish co-operation will be imprinted on what could, I believe, turn out to be a Treaty of Dublin. This is a far cry from the days when Irish officials were instructed to speak French at EU meetings.

13. Even if we have another Easter success, however, it would be idle to pretend that the relationship will be all plain sailing. Sellafield alone will ensure that we continue to get more than our fair share of bad press - the essential ambivalence of the relationship will remain. The Irish see nothing contradictory in calling for the Brits out of Ireland while embracing the fortunes of Manchester United, Liverpool and Leeds. "Brits out; Manchester United rule". And indeed we've had more complaints about Martin Johnson's oafishness in almost literally forcing the Irish President off the red carpet while meeting the Irish team at last weekend's international than about the war in Iraq. But I do believe that the ancient quarrel is in the process of being solved. What binds the two people together is greater than what separates them.

Like that great Irish man of letters, Hubert Butler, I look to the day when the border on this island becomes a mark of distinction rather than one of division.

ROBERTS

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eGram Number 33001/06
From DUBLIN
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Date Registered 28/07/2006 16:26:28
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Subject IRELAND: VALEDICTORY

Summary

NO 10 FOR [REDACTED]
FCO PLEASE PASS TO SOCA
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NIO - PLEASE PASS TO [REDACTED] (OFMDFM)
WASHINGTON - PLEASE PASS TO BOSTON, LOS ANGELES AND SAN FRANCISCO

1. The Irish Republic has changed apace during my time here. The economy continues to grow, and in many ways the country has never had it so good - though the government is looking tired and will have a fight on its hands at next year's general election. The most profound changes, however, have been a new maturity in coming to terms with its own history and a clearer recognition of the fundamental strength and importance of the bilateral relationship with the UK. We are still described as the old enemy, but are now in reality a valued - if not yet fully trusted - friend.

2. For the future, the next year or so is likely to see some old problems resolved (or at least parked). But difficult new issues [REDACTED] - details below - will take their place. Ireland matters, perhaps more for domestic than foreign policy reasons, and we need to maintain sufficient resources in Dublin to do our business here effectively.

DETAIL

3. [REDACTED] It has been a fascinating three years to have served in Dublin.

4. Economically, the sprint of the Celtic Tiger has slowed, but to a sustained marathon, albeit with some emerging concerns about the future. Barring a property crash, consumer-based economic

growth of 5% is predicted for the next two years, with some tailing off thereafter. Inflation is, however, on the increase. Meanwhile the Republic is broadening and consolidating its economic base. Inward investment into the UK continues to grow, but Irish businessmen are also busily engaged in securing footholds in Russia, China, Eastern Europe and South East Asia. Spending on R & D is growing fast and should offer opportunities in terms of UKTI's new priorities. Cork now hosts the largest nanotechnology research centre in the British Isles, established with Irish government money and headed by a British Director.

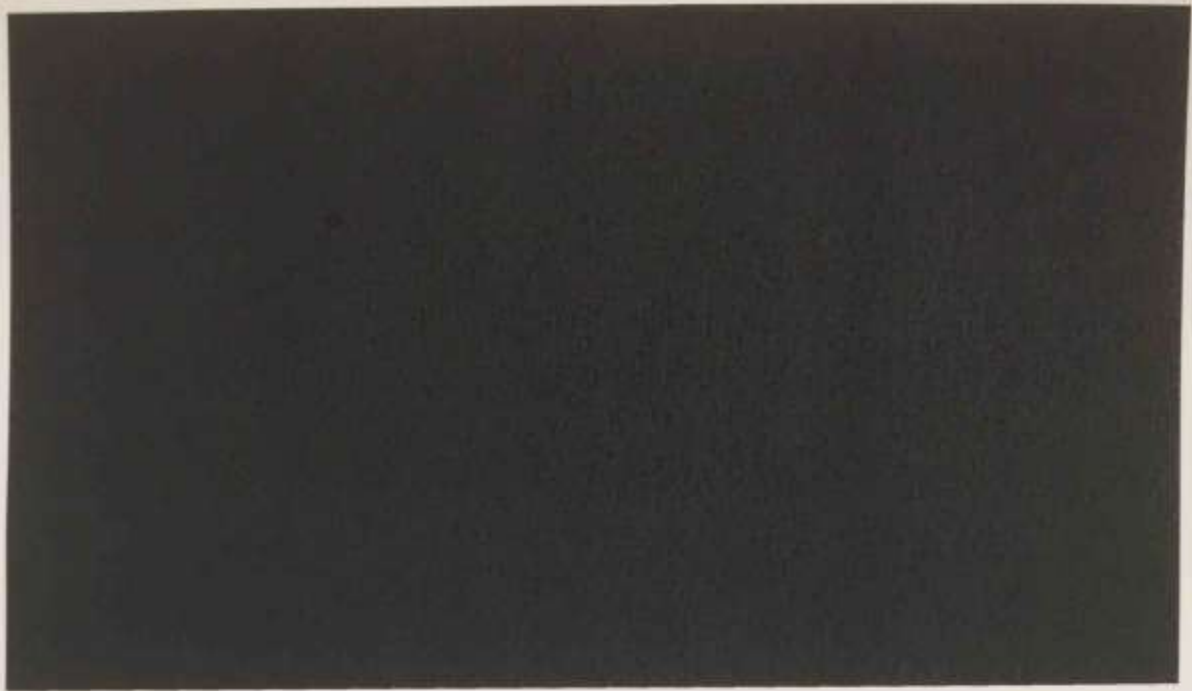
5. Power-sharing in Northern Ireland has remained elusive, to the frustration of everyone (except perhaps the DUP). The two governments have worked closely together in support of the Good Friday Agreement and the Embassy has, I hope, provided useful background support. Peter Hain's emphasis on practical North-South co-operation - on trade, energy, economic and health issues - has been warmly welcomed by the Irish. There will be a continuing and important job for us to do here in creating and maintaining the personal and business links necessary to make it happen. Demonstrating clear benefits in terms of quality of life and opportunity is the best way to underpin lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

6. Work on the EU has had both high and low points. A world-class Irish Presidency in 2004 helped us discover how much we had in common in Europe. CAP-related issues apart, last year's UK Presidency was well received.

CAP reform (and thus the Budget Review) and WTO are obvious neuralgic points. But they will also need watching over the FOE debate and on enlargement (for which their previous enthusiasm is cooling). There are both risks and opportunities on JHA (see below).

7. Perhaps the most profound change, though, has been in the Republic's growing ability to come to terms with its own history. With over 4.1 million people for the first time since the 1860's - 10% of them now from overseas - Ireland is a very different place from the rural inward-looking country of 25 years ago. This year's mature official commemorations of the Ninetieth Anniversaries of the Easter Rising and - for the first time - the Somme (in which the Embassy had a hand) exemplify the trend. England is still described as the old enemy but the UK is now in reality an acknowledged and valued - if not yet fully trusted - friend (except perhaps on the rugby field). Though we still have difficulties in some areas (such as ships' visits), the Taoiseach told me earlier this month he believed the bilateral relationship was going exceptionally well.

8. For the future, many traditional contentious issues are being resolved (or at least parked). The growing recognition of Irish service in the British Armed Forces is encouraging, not least for the veterans and families involved. Sellafield is being managed, and the Irish have agreed to talks about the future of their UNCLOS legal case. And, whatever happens on 24 November, Northern Ireland will enter a new chapter in the late autumn - though we are likely to face a bumpy ride with the Irish on some aspects of the negotiations leading up to the deadline.



10. We need to be prepared for these problems. In addition to mobilising stakeholders in the UK, this means retaining sufficient resources in Dublin to handle them effectively. The premium attached by the Irish to personal contacts and working relationships means there is no substitute for an appropriate influencing capacity on the ground. In this and other aspects of a sensitive but satisfying job, I wish my successor well.

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Contact Name
Contact Telno.
Attachments

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