

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

17 Grosvenor Place

SW1X 7HR

23rd September 1977

Dear Hugh

I am enclosing, as promised, background notes on those whom the Taoiseach and the Minister will be meeting here next week - the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, Roy Mason, Airey Neave and Frank Judd.

Also enclosed, for your information, is an interesting note by Kenneth Thompson on a conversation earlier this week with Alistair Cooke, Research Officer on Northern Ireland in the Conservative Research Department.

Yours sincerely

John H F Campbell

Mr H

Mr Hugh Swift  
Anglo Irish Section  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Dublin 2

Rt. Hon. James Callaghan, M.P., Prime Minister

On the 5th April, 1976, Labour M.P's. chose a new leader and, in effect, a new British Prime Minister. After more than 30 years in Parliament therefore, and at the age of 64, Jim Callaghan finally achieved his dearest ambition in politics. Even as shrewd a politician as he, however, must have been greatly surprised by Harold Wilson's decision to step down from the premiership. No satisfactory explanation of Wilson's reasons for retiring has yet been given - he was after all only 60 - but his public statement at the time that after a life-time of pressure as Prime Minister, in Cabinet and on his party's front-bench, he longed for the peace and quietness of the back-benches may be nearer the truth than is generally appreciated.

Jim Callaghan has always been the classical organisation and party man. "Jim cares about the Labour movement", a ministerial colleague of his said on one occasion - "those dreary committee rooms, the bad teas, the duplicating machines that get ink everywhere, the old ladies writing notices with exasperating slowness. Jim likes all that". This closeness to his political roots helped give him an instinct for doing the right thing by the movement, as when he fought within the Cabinet, almost single-handedly but successfully, against Barbara Castle's plans for trade union reform in 1969, a stand never forgotten for him by the unions. At the time he countered his colleagues' claims that trade union reform was inevitable by saying "O.K., if it's so inevitable, let the Tories pass it. All I'm saying is that it's not our issue".

It can be clearly seen therefore why, in the 1976 leadership contest, Callaghan was the candidate who, while he did not hold any strongly ideological views - (unlike his five opponents, Benn, Foot, Crosland,



Healey and Jenkins who had, it might be mentioned, all been to Oxford, while Callaghan had no university background) - was felt by the party and the unions (i.e. the movement) to have the three essential qualities for any Labour leader, the ability to unite the party, to work with the trade unions and to win a general election. He might not have been the first choice of the majority of Labour M.P's, but they regarded him as out and away preferable to any of the remaining four candidates, always a key factor in a p.r. election.

The Prime Minister is arguably the shrewdest and most pragmatic politician in Britain today. His political and parliamentary skill have, for instance, steered the party through a number of serious crises in the past few years, in particular those over Labour's attitude to Community membership, which was ultimately resolved by the use of the referendum device in June 1975 (Callaghan was then Foreign Secretary), and the forging of a parliamentary pact with the Liberals in March of this year. This agreement with the Liberals saved the Government from being defeated on a crucial vote of confidence and almost certainly losing heavily to the Tories at a subsequent general election. In addition of course, in particular because of his age, the Prime Minister's own political life was clearly at stake. His firm response to these pressures was not to panic but rather to seek to work out a new relationship in Parliament with those of the smaller parties who were not committed to bringing down the Government, in effect the Liberals and the Ulster Unionists. In circumstances of this kind principles often if not always tend to take a back seat and it is this aspect of the Prime Minister's pragmatism, especially in that it involved a specific offer to the Unionists, which gives most cause for concern. This would be all the more so if the position were to arise in the future where, for one reason or another, the Unionists might become the key to keeping a

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British Government in power. It is not unlikely therefore that, as long as Jim Callaghan is faced with a parliamentary situation where Unionist votes could at some stage become crucial to his and his Government's political fortunes, he will not wish to do anything which might compromise this potential area of vital support.

A House Divided: Jim Callaghan's book, published in 1973, on his three years dealing with Northern Ireland as Home Secretary (1967-70) and subsequently as Opposition Spokesman until the end of 1971, is in places an interesting document and gives some indication of Callaghan's personal thinking - at least in the period up to and including 1973 - on the Northern problem. The concluding paragraphs of the book (p. 187) are those most often quoted. Here, Callaghan argues that "if, by sabotage of the political structure of Northern Ireland, the majority deliberately contracted out, then Britain should feel morally free to reconsider the link between herself and Northern Ireland, the provision of troops to Northern Ireland and the financial subsidy to the Province. No one could forecast what conclusions might be reached .... But Britain cannot be expected to sit patiently and bleed indefinitely if her best efforts face deliberate sabotage by the elected majority of the Province".

Elsewhere in the book (pp. 154, 166-7, 182) Callaghan shows himself to have been at this period a keen supporter of the idea of an "All-Ireland Council", which could "serve a useful purpose in institutionalising relations and communication between North and South".

Finally, on pp 39-40, Callaghan gives his assessment of the Taoiseach:

"I had first met Lynch at the annual conference of the IMF whilst he was Minister of Finance and I was Chancellor of the Exchequer - (Callaghan was moved from the Treasury, at his request, shortly after the devaluation of sterling in 1967). From talking to him I believed him to be a cool level-headed politician, not easily swept off his feet. I have not subsequently changed my view".



Born in 1924, the son of a Yorkshire miner, Roy Mason spent the formative years of his life (1938-53) working on the coal-face. Like so many Labour M.P's. of his generation he entered politics through trade union involvement. He was elected M.P. for Barnsley in 1953 and after holding junior ministerial posts in trade and defence, became Minister for Power (1968) and later President of the Board of Trade (1969-70). With the return of the Labour Party to power in 1974 he was made Minister for Defence, where his two and a half years were most marked by a reasonably successful rearguard action (on one occasion he even threatened to resign) to contain four different sets of cuts in the Defence budget and, at a different level, by the smoothness of his relationship with the Defence chiefs, not always an easy matter for a Labour Minister. In September 1976 he was appointed to his present post.

The Secretary of State is a highly ambitious politician who, undoubtedly realising that there was little mileage to be gained for any Labour Minister at the Ministry of Defence, is said to have approached the Prime Minister and asked for the Northern Ireland portfolio. The thinking behind his request would be that, difficult and unenviable though the post might be, it would have the two-fold effect of ensuring much-needed headlines for its holder and, secondly, (as was the case with Whitelaw and Rees) of creating a fund of goodwill and sympathy for him both among his parliamentary colleagues and the party in the country.

Roy Mason is regarded in the Labour Party as an arrogant and aggressive man who it was felt, when he went to Northern Ireland, would show himself to be personally tougher and less patient than his predecessor. His concentration on the economy and in particular on the security

situation there, and the low priority which he often appears to attach to progress on the purely political front, would seem to bear out this judgment. He gives the impression of wishing to be the first British politician in the Province to get completely on top of the violence and one suspects that his real personal priority lies in this area, at least at this point in time.

In the long run, Roy Mason undoubtedly has ambitions to take over the leadership of the Labour Party but his narrow base on the centre right of the movement, allied to a somewhat arrogant manner, make this a rather remote prospect.



Frank Judd MP, Minister of State for Foreign and  
Commonwealth Affairs

Mr Judd is Labour MP for Portsmouth since 1966 and was promoted to his present position as number two in the Foreign Office in February 1977 following the appointment of Dr David Owen as Foreign Secretary.

Mr Judd's recent quick promotions could be regarded as somewhat fortuitous as in December 1976 he was promoted from Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for Overseas Development on the resignation of Mr Reg Prentice.

A former PPS to Mr Wilson, he was Opposition front bench spokesman for Defence from February 1972 to February 1974 and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Royal Navy from March 1974 to April 1976.

Mr Judd has always taken an active interest in international affairs. In 1964 he was Secretary General of International Voluntary Services, 1960-1966 Jt. Sec. Parliamentary Group for the UN, 1972 Member British Parliamentary Delegation to the Council of Europe. He was opposed to Britain's membership of the Community. Since the referendum, however, he seems to have modified his position considerably and, is careful not to allow himself to be identified with known opponents in the Cabinet such as Benn, Foot, Shore on this issue.

Mr Judd has maintained close contacts over a considerable period with the Irish Society in Portsmouth. He is regarded as shrewed and sensible and on the centre-left of the Parliamentary Labour Party.





IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

17 Grosvenor Place

SW1X 7HR

18 JUL 1977

21st July 1977

P.S.  
Pl. send copies to:  
Mr. D Kelly, MSec, D/Tacomm.

PSN  
Mr. Hugh Swift  
and return this  
to me  
J.S. 24

Dear Bob

I had a talk yesterday afternoon with Airey Neave. The main point of interest in it was that he expressed great interest in the Taoiseach's visit to London and asked to be informed in good time about when it was likely to take place. He stressed that Mrs Thatcher would be most anxious to have an opportunity to have a talk with the Taoiseach and hoped that it might be possible to fit in a meeting between them when the visit to the Prime Minister takes place. I said I was sure the Taoiseach would be anxious to meet Mrs Thatcher. While not giving the time planned for the meeting I said it would take place towards the end of September.

As you will remember when I called on Mrs Thatcher she seemed very open to the idea of a meeting and so we have something more than Mr Neave's personal enthusiasm to assure us of the Conservative Party's anxiety to make contact at top level.

Neave also mentioned to me that Mrs Thatcher had written to the Taoiseach and seemed to assume that I would have seen a copy of her letter. I take it however that it was merely a message of congratulations and that it contains nothing of substance insofar as my contact with the Conservative Party here is concerned.

Yours sincerely

*[Signature of Paul J G Keating]*

Paul J G Keating  
Ambassador

R McDonagh Esq  
Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Dublin 2

Note: I showed this to research who said that preliminary arrangements should be made for meeting with Mrs T. - if possible on the day / the meeting with the British Prime Minister. I asked Mr McDonagh, Secretary, D/FA, to ask Ambassador to try to make arrangements accordingly. J.S. 25/7.

1. Sluckoff 25/7  
To see pl.  
2. M. Murray  
(on return) 27/7

2/77

yes.  
T.  
confirmed  
for