



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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AMBASÁID NA hÉIREANN, LONDAIN



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17 January 1989

Ms Anne Anderson
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Anne

I enclose copies of my reports on Deputy Peter Barry's visit to Wormwood Scrubs and Gartree Prisons.

Mr. Barry also mentioned to me that Ms Pierce had said that a play and a current affairs programme on the Birmingham Six would be broadcast towards the end of the month, to coincide with the presentation of the petition to the Home Secretary. Mr. Barry thought that both programmes were to be made by Granada Television. Reference would be made by a retired prison officer and a prisoner that the men were beaten. Ms Pierce had asked that the above information be kept confidential as she did fear pressure could be put on Granada not to proceed with the programmes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Eamonn Gildea', is written above the typed name.

Eamonn Gildea
Administration Attache

Armstrong said his solicitor Alaister Logan was confident the case would be referred to the Court of Appeal and the announcement would be made within the next fortnight. Deputy Barry said that while speaking to Gareth Pierce the previous evening she had been a bit more cautious. Waiting for the decision was very trying. He asked me if I could follow up on the question of his inter prison visits from Carole Richardson about whom he was very concerned as he heard she was very low and suffering from depression.

Both men, but again particularly Hill were vociferous in their comments about Paul Hill who they described as a "scumbag" and a "grass" both inside and outside prison. There was no contact with him and they said that he had caused a lot of trouble in various wings and had therefore brought on himself a lot of problems' including his frequent movement within the prison system.

Hill mentioned that the Russians were coming to see him. This would seem to be in response to his letter to the Soviet Embassy mentioned in Mr. O'Neill's December report.

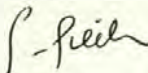
I was asked to follow up on matters involving two other prisoners, Ronnie McCartney and Paddy McLaughlin' which are being dealt with separately.

The meeting concluded after an hour and fifteen minutes.

We then saw Gerard Conlon for about ten minutes. He was quite relaxed and had just finished a series of visits from his American girlfriend. She is a lawyer and is going to be lobbying Senators and Congressmen on her return to the United States. She will also try and interest the media, particularly television stations' in their case.

Conlon was dismayed that he was still in prison after fourteen years and could not understand why the Taoiseach or Tanaiste could not issue a statement declaring the Government's belief in their innocence. He stated that their case for referral to the Appeal Court was much stronger than that of the Birmingham Six. He believes, however, that it will be Government and not the courts who will finally order their release.

On a personal level he was anxious for continuing representations to the Home Office to allow him to ring his mother every couple of weeks. Conlon claims the prison tell him that the problem is the Home Office, while he has heard that the Home Office say it is the No. 1 Governor who is the problem.



Eamonn Gildea
Administration Attache

Visit of Deputy Peter Barry to William Power and Richard McIlkenny,
Wormwood Scrubs, Wednesday, 11 January, 1989

I accompanied Deputy Barry during the visit which lasted about forty minutes. The meeting was relaxed and friendly.

Neither man would be drawn on where they saw the campaign going from here. Gareth Pierce had been in to see them a couple of weeks ago and had asked them to write to the Taoiseach asking if the Government could submit their case to the European Court or at the very least to back it with an appropriate statement. Richard McIlkenny said he had been considering writing to the Taoiseach along those lines at the weekend. Mr. Barry wondered whether taking the case to Europe might put at risk any executive decision to release them on compassionate grounds as it would be said that their case was still going through the legal process.

Mr. Barry thought it might be helpful if Chris Mullin named those who say they are responsible for the bombings. The men were not sure it would be. What was needed was for those concerned to come forward out of conscience and admit their guilt. Chris Mullin had been in to see them recently on a social visit.

Billy Power is continuing his computer course and both men now participate in a weekly church group which occasionally they have to miss if sufficient security staff are not available. If they were decategorised this would not be a problem. Both men spoke highly of the prison chaplain, Fr. Hugh Sinclair (English) and Sr. Agnes Hunt (Cork).

A petition with 50,000 signatures is to be presented to the Home Secretary on 27 January, 1989.

Both men confirmed they were well treated by staff and the staff were helpful in facilitating visits.

Both men again expressed their worry over Gerry Hunter. I confirmed that he had been moved from Gartree to Long Lartin and both men thought this could be beneficial to him. Billy Power asked if we could consider paying him a visit in Long Lartin, assuming he would agree to it.

Both men were in good spirits though it appears that Richard McIlkenny is quite wound up, an opinion also expressed to Mr. Barry by Gareth Pierce who says she is quite worried about him.

I indicated that as part of the continuing Embassy contact with them, a visit from an Embassy representative would take place shortly.



Eamonn Gildea
Administration Attache

Visit of Deputy Peter Barry to Paddy Hill (Birmingham Six);
Patrick Armstrong and Gerry Conlon (Guildford Four), HMP Gartree,
12 January, 1989

The Home Office in agreeing to the visit had asked, on grounds of security and to facilitate Conlon's visit with his girlfriend, if the men could be seen singly in a small room adjacent to the room where Conlon was having his visit.

Paddy Hill was the first to be seen and he objected vociferously and at some length to the single visit. He said that either they were all seen together or not at all. The prison immediately agreed to allow Armstrong but it would not be possible to allow Conlon in as well. This would anyway conflict with his other visit. Armstrong's arrival defused the situation and the rest of the interview was conducted in a reasonably friendly manner, with Hill doing most of the talking.

Hill complained that no interest was shown in their case either by the Embassy or the Government until after the 1985 TV programme. Deputy Barry said that while that could be argued interest was now being maintained in their case. I indicated that recent visits to Gartree and Long Lartin were evidence of the Embassy's interest and concern. Hill said what they wanted was a statement from the Taoiseach that they were innocent. Again reference was made to the Government taking their case to the European Court. Hill himself believes that after seventeen years they will be transferred to prisons in Northern Ireland where after some time they will be released on the direction of the Northern Ireland Office.

Hill complained of being all wound up, like being on a tight rope and exploding with little provocation. He instanced his earlier outburst as evidence of this. He has difficulty at times in sleeping and paces his cell in the early hours of the morning. He again referred to going on hunger strike at the end of the year.

He would not comment on whether Gerry Hunter's move to Long Lartin would be a progressive move, but from Hill's own point of view it would lessen the pressure on him a bit. Hunter was totally paranoid accusing Armstrong of trying to poison him and Hill of conspiring with Gareth Pierce to keep him in prison while Hill himself got out. Hunter badly needed medical attention.

Hill said that the Embassy had promised money. I corrected this by saying that Mr. O'Neill in his visit in December had taken note of their request and it was being considered. Though it presented some difficulties for us we were looking to see if anything could be done.