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Reference Code:	2019/31/49
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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

No 20

17 Grosvenor Place

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CONFIDENTIAL

26 May, 1989

Dear Assistant Secretary

I had lunch with John Chilcot of the Home Office on 25 May. He is looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday next.

As you are aware, the Embassy has developed a good working relationship with the Home Office in regard to PTA cases and visits to prisons and I conveyed our thanks for the help received and the increased willingness to facilitate us which we have noticed over the past year or so. I also urged the need for continued sensitivity in the handling of PTA cases (for example, in regard to the querying of names in Irish) and the need for care in briefing the press. In this connection I raised the recent case in Stoke in which three Irishmen had been arrested (not under the PTA) and where it had been clear that the press was briefed regarding a possible connection with the Turnhill bombing. Chilcot readily admitted that junior police, who quite soon after the arrests realised they had not got the right people, had been trying to justify themselves to the press. Senior police in the area were concerned about the case. He, Chilcot, noted what I had to say to him about the adverse reaction in the Irish Community in Britain (and indeed in Ireland) to incidents like this and the knock-on effect they can have on confidence, so far as Irish people are concerned, in the evenhandedness of the police here.

As far as visits to prisoners are concerned, I drew attention to some minor concessions which can sometimes be made (e.g. in regard to the reception rooms) and which can have a very worthwhile positive effect. Arising from this I drew his attention to the representations we have been making following visits to prisoners and I touched on the Birmingham Six case but, in view of your visit, did not go into detail. Chilcot did, however, recall our previous representations in the matter, including those of Minister Collins to Secretary of State Hurd, a note on which he had seen.

We talked also about the forthcoming Guildford Four Appeal. Chilcot was aware that Lord Gifford is again appearing and did not think it is a good idea. He thought that Lord Chief Justice Lane might not take the case

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but could not suggest who will do so. He mentioned Justice Taylor who is at present chairing the Hillsborough Football Disaster Enquiry, as the sort of highly intelligent and sensitive judge he would like to see taking the case. I thought it well to advise Chilcot of the likelihood that there will be a lot of observers, including an Irish Government observer, seeking admission to the trial. He saw no difficulty with this but said he would mention it to a colleague in the Court Service. He thinks, however, that the idea of the families seeking observers from the Soviet Union is ludicrous though it is as unlikely that the Court will be influenced against the appellants as it is that they will be influenced in their favour by the presence of more "respectable" observers.

I gave Mr. Chilcot a copy of the Review - he had seen late drafts but not the printed text. He thought that Hugh Annesley's experience and his good relations with Garda colleagues make him a good choice to undertake the programme of work on confidence-building measures. He said, incidentally, that while the official favourite had been Dear, Annesley's and Dear's names had been the two originally suggested by the Home Office.

Chilcot mentioned the current speculation about Cabinet changes, including the post of Home Secretary; his view is that it is all rather unprofitable, since it is unlikely that anybody knows the PM's mind and improbable that she has herself taken any decisions.

We agreed to keep in touch from time to time.

Yours sincerely



Andrew O' Rourke
Ambassador

Mr. Dermot Gallagher
Assistant Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs