

STATE PAPERS 1987

Haughey 'pragmatic and astute'

CHARLES J Haughey was "a highly pragmatic and astute politician" who had laid the groundwork of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 during his first administration in the early 1980s.

In an assessment of Mr Haughey's record for secretary of state Tom King, dated December 12 1986, PN Bell, a senior NIO official, noted: "The present Anglo-Irish Agreement stems from initiatives taken on the Irish side by a Fianna Fáil administration, led by Mr Haughey."

"At his summit meeting with Mrs Thatcher in December 1980, a series of joint studies were commenced."

The most important conclusion of these was that "formal institutional structures should be created between the heads of government, ministers and officials".

According to the official, this body still existed as the formal framework for summit meetings between the two countries and for the new Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Bell added that in the period 1980-82 Haughey had attached considerable importance to the institutional changes and on the UK commitment "to study the totality of relationships in these islands".



His successor as taoiseach, Dr Garret FitzGerald had "often observed [that] the AIA was the result of initiatives begun by his predecessor".

The memo noted that "the relatively warm relations with Mr Haughey" had deteriorated since 1982 due to his position during the Falklands

conflict and his attitude to the Northern Ireland Assembly established by Jim Prior.

Indeed, Bell noted, the Fianna Fáil

■ MEETING:
Former taoiseach Charles Haughey during a meeting with then British prime minister Margaret Thatcher at 10 Downing Street for talks about Northern Ireland

leader had been "instrumental in persuading the SDLP not to participate in the assembly" (closed by the British government in 1986).

In an accompanying paper entitled, 'Doing Business with Mr Haughey', Bell anticipated an Irish general election in 1987.

In the case of a Haughey administration the existence of the agreement might serve to discourage him "from taking extreme positions either domestically or internationally about Northern Ireland".

"For example, it would be harder for a Fianna Fáil government to try and use the powerful Irish-American lobby to our disadvantage. It might also help restrain his tendency to sudden or irrational impulses of hatred towards British governments, as shown, for instance, during the Falklands conflict."

"It might also make him harder to turn a deaf ear to our requests for extradition."

In the official's view: "Mr Haughey's record reveals him a highly pragmatic and astute politician with few scruples and a keen eye for the main chance. It also displays him as the Irish statesman who did most to promote the Anglo-Irish dialogue which culminated in the present agreement."

Ministerial meeting with UDA vetoed

Loyalist group advocated power-sharing

THE UDA's "close association with sectarian violence" dictated that British ministers should not meet members of the organisation even to discuss a recent document advocating power-sharing. This is revealed in previous confidential files released in Belfast under the new '20-Year Rule'.

In January 1987, the UDA-linked Ulster Political Research Group, launched by the late John McMichael, issued its Common Sense document, advocating a power-sharing administration for Northern Ireland without an Irish dimension. The abandonment of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was made a pre-condition for such a development.

In an analysis of the document



■ DOCUMENT:
UDA leader John McMichael

for secretary of state Tom King, dated February 22 1987, DC Kirk of the NIO recommended a cautious approach by ministers.

The official stressed that although the document was formally issued by the UPRG, "we know this group to be part of the

UDA and, in fact, the document is signed by all key members of the UDA".

He noted that following recent paramilitary attacks (the UFF had planted four bombs in Dublin in November, 1986), a UDA spokesman made it clear that the political initiative would

not deter the UDA from pursuing their paramilitary campaign either in the Republic or in the north.

He went on: "The UDA has publicly acknowledged that the UFF (a proscribed organisation) is part of the organisation. This pursuit of a joint political/military approach therefore parallels Sinn Féin's support for the actions of the Provisional IRA."

On the issue of a ministerial meeting with the UDA, the official was unequivocal: "Given the UDA's close association with sectarian violence, ministers have always in the past refused to meet (the UDA or its various political affiliations)."

"A meeting now would be widely misinterpreted by the minority community and by moderates as endorsing UDA activities."

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