

# British fretted over best way of 'handling Haughey'

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Secret official documents released to the public yesterday have demonstrated how the British government was fixated on the best way of "handling" Charles Haughey 30 years ago.

A number of the 230 documents released by the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland deal with how in early 1987 the British government and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) had concerns about what policy the Fianna Fáil leader would adopt on the 1985

Anglo-Irish Agreement.

To that end the NIO prepared three papers in 1987, two in February before Fianna Fáil took power with a minority government, and one in March after he became taoiseach.

They were entitled, "Northern Ireland: Handling Mr Haughey", "Handling Mr Haughey II" and "Handling Mr Haughey on Northern Ireland-Tactics".

There is also correspondence from British diplomat Sir David Goodall, who died last month, entitled "Doing Business with Mr Haughey". These are part of the 230 documents

which the records office have handed over to be included on the Troubles historical website, the Conflict Archive.

They illustrate a British anxiety



■ **Charles Haughey: British appeared to see him as rather self-serving**

ety that Mr Haughey as taoiseach might seek to reject the Anglo-Irish Agreement which was negotiated between a re-

luctant Margaret Thatcher and the Irish government led by Garret FitzGerald.

While in opposition, Mr Haughey effectively rejected the agreement, primarily because of its first article which stated that any change in the status of Northern Ireland could only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of the North. He also said in 1986 that if returned to government he would seek to renegotiate the agreement.

The British government appeared to see Mr Haughey as rather self-serving when it came to the accord, believing

his policy back in government would "be determined by the political dividends it pays at home".

Mr Goodall, who was the lead British civil servant in negotiating the agreement, recounted a briefing he had received from New Zealand high commissioner Bryce Harland who met Mr Haughey shortly before Christmas 1986.

Mr Harland said Mr Haughey told him that "once the agreement was out of the way the British government's response would be to wash its hands of Northern Ireland altogether".