

Did the Irish State threaten to undermine the selection of Chair for the Anglo-Irish talks?

By Robert Harris

With the release of the governmental files of the Republic of Ireland this week, [it emerged that](#) in the selection of the Chair of the Anglo-Irish 1992 peace talks, which would form the basis for the Northern Irish peace process, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs seemed to be especially exercised in preventing former House of Commons speaker George Thomas from taking the position given the strength of the invective against the man:



Former speaker of the House of Commons George Thomas, known later as Viscount Tonypandy (Image: PA)

“The Irish government thought former House of Commons speaker George Thomas was “too bitchy” to lead peace talks, new documents show.

George Thomas, the Viscount Tonypandy, had been proposed to chair crucial Anglo-Irish peace talks in 1991 – but was deemed “bitchy” and “petulant” by Irish officials, newly unsealed documents from the National Archives in Dublin reveal.

Lord Tonypandy, as Thomas was known after his elevation to the House of Lords, was one of nine names put forward by the British Government and unionists to chair talks between Dublin and Northern Irish parties.

But Irish officials described him as “widely disliked” by MPs in a briefing note from the Republic’s Department of Foreign Affairs.

The documents show officials were particularly concerned about his tendency to “not forgive slights, alleged or real.”

The briefing documents also alleged Thomas also displayed “a large streak of sycophancy” towards then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

This behaviour led one senior journalist to privately describe him as “a kind of Welsh Uncle Tom”, according to the records.”

The Irish State would have found George Thomas to be an unsuitable candidate, despite being a noted figure of British Labour, for he was against Welsh independence, was a keen Methodist and was fond of Margaret Thatcher. The [peculiar language suggests](#) an indirect reference to his personal life as an alleged homosexual, and it can be reasonably surmised that such a response was relayed back to the UK Cabinet in some possibly less than official manner – unsurprisingly amoral antics which would conflict with Ireland’s holier than thou and often [irresponsible positioning](#) on foreign or (quasi-foreign) policy.