



Prime Minister Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

This is the appointment which I mentioned to you. You will want to note in particular X.

7 July 1986

Dear Charles,

I suggest that I reply that you have noted the Foreign Secretary's intention to appoint Mr. Francis, leaving the responsibility entirely with him.

The Director-General of the British Council

I have noted the F.C.'s. decision not

As you know the Director-General of the British Council, Sir John Burgh, retires in July 1987. He will then be 61, having had his original tour of office extended by 18 months.

The British Council have conducted a thorough competition to choose a successor to Sir John. Following a general advertisement, interviews were conducted by a special committee of the Council's Board.

The Foreign Secretary has now received a letter from Sir David Orr, the Chairman of the British Council, seeking his approval for the appointment of Mr Richard Francis, lately of the BBC, as the next Director-General of the British Council, to assume office in the summer of 1987 for a period of five years. The exact date of the handover would be by arrangement with Sir John Burgh.

The Prime Minister may like to know that the Foreign Secretary has now decided to approve Mr Francis' appointment.

Mr Francis proved at interview to be the outstanding candidate of a final shortlist of four (from over 200 applications). As the Prime Minister is of course aware, Mr Francis was Managing Director, BBC Radio from 1982 until 4 July this year, and left the corporation following differences of opinion with the Director-General. We have, however, been assured by Mr Stuart Young, the Chairman of the BBC, that the circumstances of his departure did not in any way reflect on the reputation or integrity of Mr Francis. On the contrary, he is still highly regarded by Mr Young.

The Foreign Secretary also examined with particular attention Mr Francis' record when he was Controller, BBC Northern Ireland in 1973-77, and especially over the interview of INLA terrorists on the 'Tonight' programme after the assassination of Mr Airey Neave in 1979. Sir Ian Trethowan

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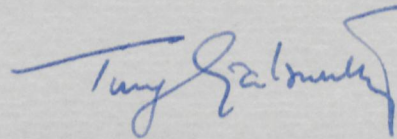


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took full responsibility for that decision at the time and has since confirmed that the decision was his alone. After the event, Sir Ian Trethowan apologised not for screening the programme as such, but for not having first warned Lady Airey in advance. Despite this episode, the Foreign Secretary is satisfied that Mr Francis managed a difficult task in Northern Ireland with considerable skill and political sensitivity. There were views within the BBC that he had inclined too much to the Government view. Sir Geoffrey Howe was struck by the excellent impression which Mr Francis made on the Selection Committee and by the complete confidence in Mr Francis' judgement and reliability expressed by Mr Stuart Young.

We have checked with the Security Service who have no adverse record of Mr Francis. Their experts know nothing that would lead them to question the appointment. At official level, the Northern Ireland office have told us that it is most unlikely there would be any objections to the appointment.

I am sending a copy of this letter for information to Miss Joan Naughton (Lord President's Office).

Yours ever,  


(A C Galsworthy)  
Private Secretary

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