

REYNOLDS, ALBERT TD

An Taoiseach, Leader of Fianna Fail since February 1992.

Born 1932 in Rooskey, Co Roscommon, in the Irish midlands. Educated at Summerhill College, Sligo.

Began his working life as a clerk, but his entrepreneurial skills soon became evident: ventures included a chain of dancehalls in the 1960's, hotels, bars, factories and a newspaper. He now owns a lucrative pet food business, and has shares in property. He first became involved with Fianna Fail in the mid-60s and joined the National Executive in 1974 and the Longford County Council in 1975.

A strong supporter of Haughey in the early years, Reynolds quickly achieved promotion and held several Ministerial posts: Communications and Transport (1979-81), Industry and Energy (1982), Industry and Commerce (1987-8) and Finance (1988-91). His disillusionment with Haughey is said to stem from the 1989 election, which he believed was ill-timed. He resented Haughey going over his head during the negotiations with the Progressive Democrats. Sacked in November 1991 following his support for the backbench motion of no confidence in Haughey as Taoiseach. Appointed Leader of Fianna Fail on 10 February following Haughey's resignation and elected Taoiseach the following day.

Reynolds is a tough, shrewd and pragmatic operator who brings a business approach to political problems. His first action on taking office was to carry out a radical reshuffle of the Government, sacking all but three Fianna Fail Cabinet Ministers.

But the public's high hopes of him were not realised and he became increasingly unpopular. Within Government, relations with his coalition partners the PDs, deteriorated during the course of the year, with the PDs feeling increasingly marginalised. Matters came to a head in the Autumn when Reynolds accused PD leader Des O'Malley (q.v) of dishonesty in his evidence to the Beef Tribunal. The PDs withdrew from Government, forcing Reynolds to call an election. Fianna Fail lost 9 of their 77 seats, but at Reynold's initiative, against much Party opposition entered coalition with Labour.

While Reynolds is at home with financial and commercial matters, he has little Government experience of Northern Ireland. His first cautious comments on taking office suggested that he would be less slippery than Haughey and accept that the Northern Ireland problem is a long term one involving reconciliation between the communities. However, his first months in office were overshadowed by the abortion issue and, since the 1992 election he has left most of the running on Northern Ireland to Tanaiste Dick Spring. Reynolds remains unpopular and may not lead his party in to the next election, though he has declared his intention to do so.

Married; two sons, five daughters. His wife Kathleen, underwent a mastectomy in late 1991. He is a diabetic and teetotaler.

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SPRING, DICK

Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign Affairs since January 1993. Leader of the Labour Party.

Born 1950, Tralee, Co. Kerry.

Education: Christian Brothers Tralee: St Joseph's Roscrea: Trinity College (Dublin): The King's Inn (called to the Bar 1975). Played Gaelic football and hurling for Kerry and won three rugby caps for Ireland in 1979 (though he dropped the ball disastrously on one famous occasion). Elected to the Dáil 1981 taking over his father's seat. Minister of State in the Department of Justice 1981-82. Elected Leader of the Labour Party on 1 November 1982 following the resignation of Michael O'Leary. Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) 1982-87.

Spring comes from a family notable in politics and sport. His election as Leader of his Party, when it was in disarray and only three weeks before a general election, helped it to maintain a reasonable level of success, but in the coalition he was unable to prevent Dr Fitzgerald treating him as very much the junior partner.

After factional disputes in the late 1980s, the Party regained a sense of unity and purpose in the 1990s largely as a result of the election of 'their' Presidential candidate, Mary Robinson, and Spring's own undisputed political flair. At its 1991 conference, the Party adopted a new Constitution designed to bring the Party more into the mainstream of European social democracy and jettisoned some of their more embarrassing and outdated ideological baggage. The Party's performance in the 1992 General Election (when it more than doubled its seats from 16 to 33) surprised even its supporters and placed Spring in the role of king-maker, a position he exploited to the full. His decision to enter coalition with Fianna Fail under Reynolds in spite of his earlier trenchant criticism of them surprised and disappointed many who had voted Labour because they wanted a change from Fianna Fail. Since then Spring's popularity has plummeted.

On entering Government, Spring said that Northern Ireland was his number one priority. A moderate nationalist, he has close links with the British Labour Party. He moves with decision and energy, despite the pain he still suffers from a serious back injury, caused by a crash in his official Gardaí car in the mid-80's. Bright, articulate and ambitious, he does not suffer fools gladly and can be brusque - perhaps because of his back pain. A master when it comes to political abuse, he is reluctant to take criticism himself.

His wife Kristi is American: two sons, one daughter.

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GEOGHEGAN-QUINN, MAIRE TD

Minister for Justice since 1993

Born 1950. Educated (in Irish) at Colaiste Muire, Mayo and Carysfort Teacher Training College, Dublin. A former primary school teacher, Mrs Geoghegan-Quinn entered the Dáil as TD for Galway West in 1975 at a by-election caused by the death of her father, John Geoghegan.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Commerce and Energy (subsequently Minister of State) 1977-79, with special responsibility for consumer affairs. Minister for the Gaeltacht 1979-81 (the first woman cabinet minister since Countess Markiewicz in 1921). Minister of State at the Department of Education in Haughey's 1982 administration. 'Special spokesperson' for Women's Affairs in opposition. Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach 1987-91 with responsibility for party coordination and EC affairs. A strong opponent of coalition with the PDs, she was sacked by Haughey in November 1991 for voting against him in the parliamentary party's no-confidence motion. Reappointed to Government as Minister of State for Tourism, Transport and Communications following Reynold's victory in the leadership content in 1992.

A member of Reynold's "country and western" clique, and a firm supporter in the 1991/2 heaves against Haughey. Shrewd and intelligent, and sometimes spoken of as a further leader of Fianna Fail. A good constituency deputy and a popular member of the Dáil, she has taken time to settle down in the Justice Portfolio.

Married 1973 (John Quinn); two sons.

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MURRAY, FRANK

Secretary to the Government since 1992.

Born 1941 Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim

Educated at Presentation Brothers College, Carrick-on-Shannon and UCD (BA, DPA).

Entered the Civil Service (in the Forestry Division of the Department of Lands) in 1960; Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas 1964-74; Private Secretary to the then Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave, 1974-7; Department of the Taoiseach (Northern Ireland and International Affairs Division) 1977-83; Assistant Secretary to the Government 1983-1992.

Somewhat dour and retiring on first acquaintance, he is now finding his feet as the Republic's most senior civil servant. Cautious, tough and helpful.

Married with four children.

WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE

Thank you for your letter of 8 June. I understand from Sir Robin Butler that the Irish official party which came to London for talks on 9 June was aware with the programme arrangements described in your letter.

I see no difficulty with your suggestion. We shall hold the Prime Minister's note a note with the Taoiseach and the following plenary in the Cabinet Room. The meeting between the other Ministers from 1983 to approximately 1830 can be held upstairs in the Oireachtas Room.

I am copying this letter to Jonathan Shipman (Northern Ireland Office) and Melanie Lynch (Cabinet Office).

Handwritten signature

RODERIC LYNE

J. S. Smith, Esq.
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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