

**JAMES HAWTHORNE**

**Dr James Hawthorne CBE BA LLD FRSA FRTS.**

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## **REAL LIVES**

### *REASON FOR PUBLISHING*

*Under current 'freedom of information' legislation, the BBC was recently obliged to release to the Guardian newspaper documents relating to the 'Real Lives' controversy of 1985 when the BBC Board of Governors, under pressure from the Home Secretary, banned a television programme dealing with aspects of politics and terrorism in Ireland.*

*I was BBC Controller Northern Ireland at the time. When I retired from the BBC at the beginning of 1988 I was commissioned by the BBC to create an archive of the BBC's activities in Northern Ireland during the ten years of my stewardship.*

*The archive (the Hawthorne Papers) amounting to about 530,000 words, has been retained in the BBC's Written Archives library at Caversham since mid-1990. The whole of the material was rated 'confidential' and some of it had to conform to the Official Secrets Act.*

*Following my presentation of the Hawthorne Papers I was able to extend the work and, beyond the terms of the original contract with the BBC, presented a second edition to Written Archives.*

*The Guardian has now published accounts and interpretations of the Real Lives controversy using material never before released to the public. The Guardian article has therefore put the matter into the public domain, but, of necessity, it is an incomplete account.*

*I have therefore decided to publish this full account, as presented to BBC Written Archives.*

*(James Hawthorne)*

**BBC series title: REAL LIVES**

**Programme title: AT THE EDGE OF THE UNION**

## **A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE - JAMES HAWTHORNE**

### **BACKGROUND**

During 1984 I had a number of health problems and I was told by the Dundonald Hospital that they wished to dispose of my gall bladder. I had to keep them waiting until January of the next year. Thus on the 7th of January 1985 I entered hospital, as planned, to have the deed done. The Governors of the BBC had declared themselves worried about the strain under which I was working and ordered that convalescence was to be followed by a period of special leave. I was not due to return to duty until 1st June. During my absence, Cecil Taylor (Head of Programmes) was to act as Controller Northern Ireland. On 1st June, in a blaze of enhanced glory, he would then begin his retirement. Meanwhile, the recruitment of a replacement Head of Programmes would go ahead and, assuming that by the month of March I would be fully recovered, I would interrupt leave to be involved in the exercise. A selection board was in fact held on 12th March. The successful candidate was Arwel Ellis Owen.

Before going on leave, I had been aware that Paul Hamann (Documentary/Features BBC TV London) had in mind a pro-

gramme in which he would probe the psyche of extremism within the 'normality' of Northern Ireland. During my leave, that idea was more fully developed and placed within the 'Real Lives' series. Acting Controller, Cecil Taylor, had been duly consulted.

Paul Hamann had over ten years experience as a documentary film maker. He had become something of a Northern Ireland specialist and had made a number of highly acclaimed programmes about various aspects of the Troubles.

Of all the London-based producers who made programmes about Northern Ireland, he was by far the most communicative in terms of keeping Regional Management informed about his programme activities. He would, for example, call in to see me about long range ideas. If he were working on a Northern Ireland subject, he would often report operational difficulties - and triumphs.

## PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

When I returned to duty in June 1985, his latest programme on Northern Ireland had already been filmed and was being edited in London. Transmission had been set for August. Paul discussed possible titles with me over the phone; eventually it became 'At the Edge of the Union'. He also told me that he felt there was 'a moment' in his filming when Mrs McGuinness had all but admitted her husband's connection with the IRA. I was intrigued. Something to discuss when he would bring over the final cut for my approval.

That was arranged for 3 o'clock on Wednesday 26th June in my office. I asked Arwel Ellis Owen and John Conway (Editor News and Current Affairs) to join us.

We liked what we saw and we congratulated Paul on his achievement. I said that he had tackled a difficult subject and handled it well. We discussed one or two fine details. Had there been a moment when Mrs McGuinness got close to admitting that certain 'connection'? No, I did not think she had given anything away. I suggested that a particular piece of newsreel footage, illustrating a point made by Martin McGuinness, was a touch too long and that a caption was not clear. Paul agreed and made a note to find possible ways of editing in the changes.

We speculated that there would be the usual 'phone calls' after the transmission of the programme but that would be nothing new. However, it was not a programme of sufficient controversy to be referred by me to the Director-General. I was aware that Hamann had been in close touch with his departmental head Will Wyatt and his immediate boss Eddie Mirzoeff who in turn had discussed the programme with Cecil Taylor. Cecil had also advised that the programme, based as it was on interviews with two legally elected politicians, did not require clearance at D-G level. In short, after years of experience dealing with controversial network programmes, this one was not very high on my Richter Scale of anxiety.

## 'REFERRING UPWARDS'

Programmes cannot be created by committees. When a producer discussed his work with me, it was never my practice to insist on changes merely to bring it into line with my own set of programme values. The clear function of Controller Northern Ireland (CNI) was to ensure that programmes about Ireland were substantially sound and accurate. I had a duty also to consider public reaction, and the effect a particular programme might have on public order or to what extent it might exacerbate hatred or violence. Programme makers on the whole respected those responsibilities and it would not be uncommon to receive phone calls or notes afterwards thanking me for my guidance.

This latest offering from Hamann was certainly sound and there would have been few who would have done it better. It was a fair, if chilling, insight into the thinking of the two young men. The programme was, of course, well within the law and the BBC's own guidelines and standards. Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein and Gregory Campbell of the DUP were elected representatives. Both had already been seen and heard on regional BBC radio and television, most often at Radio Foyle. In another city at another time, these two young politicians would probably have been on the same side, the side of the working class. The programme was, essentially, sad.

Gregory Campbell and I had exchanged letters on one occasion over the usage of the name 'Derry' - a perennial point of dispute - and I had talked to him once in Derry/Londonderry over a cup of coffee and a BBC bun at a small reception hosted by our station manager. In my letter I had thanked him for his 'excellent contributions to Radio Foyle programmes'.

In my view it was not necessary to discuss the coming programme with Lady (Lucy) Faulkner at this stage, if at all. The reason for advising the National Governor about a forthcoming programme was primarily to protect her position if it was likely to lead to much public controversy. Thus, for example, if she were to receive complaints over the telephone, she should be forewarned in order to be forearmed. Or if top Management were likely to discuss a matter with the BBC Chairman, it would clearly be sensible if lines between me and the National Governor were clear.

## BATTLE LINES

At this particular time (June 1985) there was a much more controversial programme in preparation - a Panorama programme on John Stalker. Intensive consultation with London - mainly hinging on legal problems - had been going on for some time and I had been keeping Lucy in the picture. In my judgement however, 'At the Edge of the Union' was just another soundly made programme from the experienced and reliable Paul Hamann and I simply did not expect trouble. The Stalker programme might be a different matter!

About three or four weeks after I had previewed the film, Radio Times proofs arrived in Belfast via our rather primitive facsimile. I suggested one or two amendments which were accepted by the editor. I did not realise however that the Radio Times had chosen to turn the publicity for the programme into a substantial colour central spread. I doubt if that knowledge would, in any way, have affected my view of the copy or led to any apprehension about the programme itself.

Lucy Faulkner's distinguished term as National Governor was to end on Wednesday 31st July and a number of valedictory occasions had been planned. On Sunday 28th July, Lucy would be running a lunch for senior Northern Ireland BBC staff at her home. On Tuesday evening (30th) I was to host a cocktail party in her honour at Broadcasting House to which the 'great and the good' (including the Secretary of State) were invited. That would be followed by a dinner party for Lucy and her family circle. Finally on Wednesday 31st July there was to be the staff farewell which would take the form of a buffet lunch in Broadcasting House.

On Friday 26th July, or possibly Thursday 25th - my notes enter a question mark - I took a telephone call from a reporter with a local Northern Ireland accent who said he was a stringer for the Sunday Times. He apologised for involving me personally in his inquiry but had I a comment about the coming Real Lives programme due to go out within the next fortnight? I told him that there had been the usual press preview in London, that I had seen the programme myself in the preparation stage and that it had been made by the distinguished film maker Paul Hamann. No, he had not been at the preview and no, he was not familiar with Hamann's previous Northern Ireland films. Why then was he ringing? He was just checking if I had seen the film myself. He rang off, with renewed thanks, apparently satisfied. Similar disingenuous calls were being received elsewhere in the BBC but the recipients had not been comparing notes. Had we done so, we might have realised that something was in the wind.

## THE SUNDAY TIMES SETS A TRAP

Unknown to anyone in the BBC, Barrie Penrose of the Sunday Times had been building up a major article about the programme ever since the press preview in London where it had caused not the slightest stir. Central to his theme was that the BBC were proposing to interview 'the IRA's Chief of Staff' and he had been sending hand delivered letters to the Home Secretary (Leon Brittan), the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Douglas Hurd) and the Prime Minister's press secretary Bernard Ingham. The vital comment from the Prime Minister herself was missing and it was arranged that a generalised question would be slipped in by Mark Hosenball, a Sunday Times correspondent in Washington, where the PM was giving a briefing for British reporters. Some days earlier the PM had used the phrase 'providing terrorists with the oxygen of publicity' when commenting on the media's behaviour, chiefly the American networks, during a hijack crisis in the Middle East. How, asked Hosenball, would the Prime Minister react if she were to learn that 'a British TV Company' was to interview the IRA Chief of Staff?

She replied that she would 'condemn them utterly'.

According to Michael Leapman in his book 'The Last Days of the Beeb' (Allen and Unwin 1986, page 245) a Downing Street spokesman telephoned the Sunday Times the next day (Saturday) to stress that Mrs Thatcher 'had been speaking hypothetically and not about any particular intended programme'. Penrose, noted Leapman, did not make that clear in his article.

On Saturday morning my own phone began ringing. It was the BBC Press Office in London and it was clear that the we were soon to be plunged into a row of gargantuan proportions. Much time was spent with Peter Rosier and other senior levels in the BBC's information machine trying to recall who had spoken to whom about what. For myself, I had only one all-consuming question. How could such a decent piece of programme making, from so reliable and professional a producer as Hamann, be causing so much mayhem? Having checked that there were no apparent skeletons in the BBC cupboard, I rang Lucy Faulkner only to find that she had already been embroiled in the controversy and in touch with the Chairman. She must have wondered why she had not heard from her own Controller earlier.

Much was to turn on that very point. Why had Controller Northern Ireland not informed the National Governor?

## CONTROLLER NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE NATIONAL GOVERNOR

The record will show that during the seven years Lucy and I had worked together, the exchange of information between us

had seldom, if ever, produced problems. Governors are not part of the editorial process and they never exercised any right to preview programmes. But Northern Ireland is a rather special place, and both the Controller and the National Governor are vulnerable to pressure and abuse from the public. Broadcasting is their special concern but the well-being and safety of Northern Ireland is paramount. Lucy and I well understood our separate roles within the BBC system but it would be true to say that we frequently exceeded what was separately required of us and we often exchanged views in ways that went beyond formal BBC protocol and tradition. We did not always see eye to eye, but we got on well as people. Our good relationship was well assisted by Virginia Hardy, Secretary BBC Northern Ireland. Virginia was not called upon to be a shuttle diplomat, but rather a person who could be brought into our debate. There was therefore no 'barrier' between me and Lucy on the weekend in question. It would have been nice if I had been the first to bring Lucy the bad news but I doubt if that would have affected the course of events which was to follow.

It must be noted also that until Saturday morning 27th none of us had any indications that a huge row was going to break out. The programme was still some time away and by that time a successor to Lady Faulkner, the as-yet unannounced Dr Jim Kincade, would have already been one week in office. Lucy had been joking about putting her feet up and not having to answer for the BBC from August onwards. From then on, Dr Kincade would be in the chair and I had planned to brief him about a whole range of matters in due course. No doubt, being new to the BBC and totally inexperienced in the ways of the vituperative, he might need to be alerted in good time about a major network programme centred on Derry, the city of his birth.

Previous rows had often hinged upon whether a programme had been properly 'cleared' and sometimes I had suffered some anxiety while that particular aspect was being checked. No such anxiety applied in this case. Liaison had been excellent. I had no doubts in my mind about the programme itself and anticipated few difficulties in defending it. It was just another network programme about Northern Ireland, few of which ever caused ripples elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Within Northern Ireland there might be the usual cries of 'bias' but many of those would be, as always, self-cancelling. As to Sinn Fein and DUP Councillors stating their positions on television, Northern Ireland had seen it all before!

#### THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES TO ACT

In that frame of mind, I watched with alarm what was to unfold within the next forty-eight hours. As early as Saturday I learned that the Chairman had it in mind to call a special meeting of the Board of Governors. My own phone rang without ceasing. The Sunday Times article duly appeared and the Sunday lunch at Lucy's came and went though the 'row' was high on our agenda throughout. BBC Northern Ireland staff who attended shared a slightly bemused feeling that what was happening could not be real.

But it was real indeed! In the absence of the Director-General, who was on holiday in Scandinavia, the Board of Management in London was to consider the debacle on Monday. A special combined Management and Governors' meeting was being proposed for Tuesday. That, and every other morsel of information, was being intensively covered by press, television and newspapers.

The Board of Management duly met on Monday 29th July and viewed the film. Alan Protheroe may have seen it on the Sunday but the upshot was that the Board now endorsed it. One or two possible slight amendments or additions were suggested but substantially the programme was 'passed' in exactly the same way as I had done a month earlier. I was not in the least surprised by the Board of Management's support, but I was certainly pleased.

A decision had been taken to invite me to the meeting of the joint boards the following day. Johnnie Wilkinson, Director of Public Affairs was to pass me the message. In the panic he forgot! Dick Francis, my predecessor in office in Northern Ireland, and by then Managing Director of Radio, rang me in my office at 6.40 p.m. to check some points for the following day. For a moment we were at cross purposes and then Dick realised that I had not been invited to the meeting. My driver Jackie Boyle was quickly summoned to take me home to collect my overnight bag. We were about to set off for the airport, already pressed for time, when Dick rang again to read me out the letter from the Home Secretary to the Chairman in which he had called for the banning of the programme. We took up a few more valuable seconds to agree that the letter was preposterous. The time was now 7.30 p.m. and Jackie drove me like one possessed to the airport to catch the 8.30 shuttle. I picked up my ticket and boarding pass at the BA desk at a brisk trot. The BA man called after me: 'Have a good meeting!'

#### MEETING THE GOVERNORS - IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Before Tuesday's meeting was due to begin, Michael Checkland, acting as Director-General, called a meeting of the executive side - Board of Management plus myself. He had no special strategy to communicate except to 'play it straight'. The referral procedures on the London side had not gone absolutely according to the book. But that did not worry me in any way. Had Protheroe heard about the programme, days or even weeks earlier, he would have cross-checked with me for an opinion and he would most certainly have accepted my endorsement. Checkland told us he would make an opening statement and would concede the point about the referral procedures. I was concerned that the confessional might go too far. The procedures in my view had been consistent with agreed policy. Before the press had become interested, the programme had been vetted at

the appropriate levels of Management. Some of us had a feeling that the Governors might take some action in the light of the Home Secretary's letter but we knew not what.

At the meeting itself I seated myself beside Johnnie Wilkinson, Director of Public Affairs who, constitutionally, was my closest contact on the Board of Management. That seemed the right thing to do. Not being a member of either Board I was not sure what my role should be; in particular, whether I could enter the discussion freely or be obliged to wait until the Chairman invited me to speak. In the event, no special restriction seemed to have been placed on my participation, at least by the Chair, but once or twice, Johnnie, who was particularly tense, restrained me as I shaped up to intervene.

The Chairman apologised for calling the meeting at such short notice. He particularly welcomed Lucy Faulkner. This was her last day in office. Farewells had already been taken and now she was being 'recalled' but her advice and counsel, said the Chairman, would be specially valuable. Dr Kincade, National Governor-designate was also made welcome. By the projected transmission date he would have taken up his duties. Members of the Board of Management were then asked for their views.

#### BOARD OF MANAGEMENT'S EXPLANATION

Michael Checkland said that the programme had not been referred to Assistant D-G (Alan Protheroe) nor to D-G himself on the grounds that it had been fully cleared by me. I was very happy with that line but he then described a 'lapse' on the London side of the referral procedure as a 'technical foul'. I thought he had used the wrong metaphor. Technical 'hitch' perhaps, but 'foul' no. Nevertheless he gave a concise account of what had happened and what the film was about. He also made the key point that had Protheroe been brought into the picture earlier, he would have checked with me, and having my support, would have cleared the programme for transmission. Checkland added that if the London procedures had been fully observed, it was possible that the Radio Times spread might have been reduced. Again, I thought that the Radio Times issue struck a wrong - and dangerous - note. At no time in my experience had we ever traded off low-key Radio Times coverage against a strong or potentially controversial programme.

Alan Protheroe then gave an assessment of the film and of what he believed to be its journalistic strengths. If the proper referral procedures had been observed, he said, Management might not have been taken by surprise by the mischievous action of the Sunday Times.

By this stage, and to my increasing dismay, Management was reinforcing its admission that quite significant mistakes in the referral procedures had been made. I thought differently. My argument would have been that the programme had all the managerial supervision that its content had warranted. Not everything containing controversial material can be referred ever upwards to the Director-General. Besides, we were now dealing with a film which had had more senior editorial scrutiny than any that had ever gone before. There was the point that Alasdair Milne had not seen it. But many a controversial programme had been dealt with in the absence of the D-G, notably, for example, when Sir Ian Trethowan had been ill.

Michael Checkland returned to the validity and balance of the programme itself. He argued that it was entirely consistent with agreed policy. The Home Secretary had asked for the programme to be banned. If the BBC complied with that request, then the BBC's actual and perceived independence would be impugned.

Brian Wenham, Director of Programmes Television, said that, because controversy was now so intense, the programme would inevitably be seen as 'the programme of the row' and it would now need to be prefaced by an introduction and followed by a debate. Arrangements were on stand-by to do that.

#### TO VIEW OR NOT TO VIEW

The Chairman said that the Home Secretary would want to see the programme if its transmission were agreed to. I should have wished that point to have been considered and the Home Secretary's request thrown out, or else to force on the Home Secretary, and not the BBC, the responsibility of banning the programme, but the Chairman moved to consider whether the Governors themselves should preview it. The Chairman felt he could not fully support Management if he had not seen the programme for himself. Sir John Johnston reminded the meeting of the 'non-viewing' convention but noted that the right of the Governors to view programmes in advance did exist.

Lady Faulkner said that if the Home Secretary's point hinged upon security, there was little point for the Board to view the programme. She could not support the idea.

Alwyn Roberts, the Welsh National Governor, said that the grounds for viewing the programme could only be that the Home Secretary's letter had represented an unprecedented intervention in the BBC's editorial process.

Jocelyn Barrow seemed to favour viewing in these exceptional circumstances while Dick Francis, Managing Director Radio, cited the case of 'Yesterday's Men' where a preview by some members of the Board had only complicated the BBC's position in the arguments that had followed.

Sir William Rees-Mogg, the Vice-Chairman, believed there was no choice but to view the programme.

Watson Peat, National Governor for Scotland, noted that the Home Secretary had not seen the programme he was objecting to; he wondered what he might have said in his letter if he had seen it. Lady Faulkner said that, whatever decision was taken, the handling by television of the subject of terrorism would be affected for the future: Sinn Fein was a legitimate and active political party; our decision was therefore of importance.

At this point I said that the argument that security was threatened by an individual programme was often advanced by critics in Belfast. I had always replied that objective, responsible programmes posed no threat to the security situation. All that was new, I said, was that the Home Secretary himself was now deploying these discredited security arguments. Lucy, to my surprise, disagreed; she said there was a connection between programmes and security.

Malcolm McAlpine believed that the Board was not competent to assess security.

Daphne Park said that the credibility of the Board was at stake and that it would be irresponsible not to view the programme.

Lady Parkes was concerned that viewing might permit pressure on the Board in future but Jocelyn Barrow felt that, all circumstances considered, the better course was in fact to see the programme.

The Chairman said that the Home Secretary's letter had been unprecedented. Dick Francis said it was the wording and vehemence of the letter that was unprecedented together with the fact that it had been deliberately made public.

Bill Cotton, Managing Director Television, did not believe the Governors should view the programme. He defended its contents and said that any banning should be done by the Home Secretary himself.

Lady Faulkner said that the issue was whether advocates of terrorism should appear on television. The Chairman agreed that their discussion would have implications for the future freedom of the media. Jocelyn Barrow said that while the Home Secretary had the power to ban, the Governors had the responsibility to decide what should be broadcast.

The Earl of Harewood believed the credibility of the Governors depended on their viewing the programme and Alwyn Roberts also came down on the side of viewing. Watson Peat and Malcolm McAlpine still held that the central issue was security on which the BBC were not capable of making a judgement. Sir John Johnston 'reluctantly' moved towards the pro-viewing argument and the Chairman rounded off by saying that that was where the consensus now appeared to lie. He warned however that such a precedent would lead to the Board having to view other such programmes in future.

I made a final intervention. I reminded the Governors that this particular programme was not in any way unique in the fact that it included an interview with an individual who supported violence. Sinn Fein, I argued, had more than fifty democratically elected representatives who were active at all levels in Ulster politics, all of them maintaining the views expressed by Martin McGuinness. The BBC's task was to cover the politics of all parties.

## TO VIEW

The decision to view had now been taken by what appeared to be a narrow majority following a late surge in favour. Finally, Lucy Faulkner reminded her colleagues that in viewing the film, they should remember their responsibilities to the people of Northern Ireland and to envisage how the programme might be viewed in the Province.

Looking around that particular assembly, I was not totally convinced they were capable of the task.

## THE GOVERNORS' REACTIONS TO THE PROGRAMME

We moved into the adjoining room for a cold buffet lunch. Several monitors had been set up and the programme was watched in groups as we finished our meal. Mike Checkland was worried about the groupings and attempted belatedly and unsuccessfully to place some of us within clusters of Governors. A mood of collective disapproval had set in. We returned to the Boardroom and the Chairman invited his deputy, Sir William Rees-Mogg to lead off.

Sir William said he had watched the programme with an open mind. He returned to what he called the serious failure of the referral procedure and he could not accept that it was merely a 'technical foul'. He regretted that because of that failure the Director-General's opinion was not available. Equally, he regretted that Lady Faulkner had not been consulted - I presume, by me. He believed that the programme was 'totally unacceptable', sympathetic to the IRA, misleading to the mainland audience and disruptive to community relations in the Province itself.

The Chairman turned to Lucy. She began by saying, a little jocularly, that she now understood why 'Jimmy hadn't told her about it'. She said she was 'utterly horrified' by the film. It was, she said, 'inflammatory' and could well lead to individuals resorting to violence. It was unbalanced, and sympathetic to the IRA. She thought that the newsreel footage of the RUC breaking up a Catholic demonstration in 1968 should have been accompanied by scenes of stoning the police in 1970.

Taking the views of these two powerful Governors together, the programme was now being attacked because it had not presented a balanced totality of the Ulster situation. It was too late to plead that it had never tried to do so. It was condemned for its lack of truth and for being sympathetic to the IRA. And I was now in the frame; an accusation of duplicity had been more than gently floated.

Sir John Johnston said he was worried by the film. It might have portrayed the truth about Martin McGuinness and Gregory Campbell but there had been an overall suggestion that society in Northern Ireland consisted of two embattled camps, each prepared to shoot at the other.

Alwyn Roberts said the film scared him, but so did the reality of Northern Ireland. It had set out to show that reality and it had succeeded. One or two bits might be adjusted but broadcasters would be distorting the truth if they ignored extremism. With some amendments it should be shown.

Malcolm McAlpine's reaction was simple: 'No show!'

Watson Peat agreed. Modifying the programme would not solve the problem.

Lady Parkes agreed with the Vice-Chairman and Lady Faulkner. She accepted that the programme had been made in good faith but that 'it probably ought not be shown'.

Daphne Park strongly supported the Rees-Mogg Faulkner view and felt it was provocative to both communities.

Jocelyn Barrow agreed. She believed the programme was 'sinister'.

Lord Harewood declared himself a 'passionate no-show-er'. He said the programme was 'irresponsible, smooth, odious and hateful'.

Finally, Dr Jim Kincade was asked for his view. He said if the programme were shown he would have to consider his position as a BBC Governor. (The Chairman was to remark to me afterwards that it was the first time someone had ever talked of resignation before being appointed!)

The Chairman said he would not comment on the programme but wished to express his surprise and consternation at the stage that had now been reached. If the Board were to go against the advice of Management they would be seen to be acting for the wrong reasons and succumbing to Government pressure. The consequences for the BBC would be 'immeasurable'. Daphne Park said the Board should not be deterred. They should not be 'blackmailed by their wish to be solid with Management'. The Chairman repeated that he was worried about the implications for the future of the BBC.

## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE

Mike Checkland reminded the Governors that the programme had taken as its theme the irreconcilable differences between extremists in Northern Ireland. It certainly contained unpalatable, even 'odious' facts, but they were facts nevertheless. He believed that the audience would react with sadness about the polarity of extremes in Northern Ireland.

Alan Protheroe argued that the programme had not set out to give a total picture of Northern Ireland. The subject was the polarisation of attitudes. That was a political fact. Odious and frightening the two individuals might be, but if one of the two had charisma, was he not in the mould of such men as Grivas and Makarios? BBC's coverage of Northern Ireland had been careful and detailed over fifteen years. The Real Lives production team had operated with the full knowledge of the security forces. Sections of the programme might be improved but the relationship between Sinn Fein and the IRA had been made clear. With respect to Lady Faulkner, he said, there was nothing in the film that would come as a surprise to viewers in Northern Ireland. Freedom of expression was an important issue and there would be international repercussions which would damage the BBC's reputation.

Johnnie Wilkinson entered the argument for the first time and urged Governors to listen to 'the considered views of the two men in the room who had occupied the hot seat of Controller Northern Ireland: James Hawthorne and Richard Francis'.

Taking that cue, I said that I saw my job as giving advice and counsel to producers from London who were preparing programmes about the Province. I did not monitor the progress of productions in close detail, but I acted as a point of responsible reference. I said that Paul Hamann's approach to the programme had been 'impeccable' and I had supported his intentions; i.e. of making a programme about extremists. Whether or not we liked what we saw, I believed that the programme would help the mainland audience to understand some of 'the darker passions' in Northern Ireland. Real Lives was a

real programme about real people.

The Chairman replied that while the content was consistent with the 'Real Lives' series, the context had been changed utterly by the events of the last few days. I did not understand how that reduced the validity of the programme, but I simply added that the decision not to show the programme would have serious implications for the BBC and indeed for other broadcasting organisations which looked to our standards and independence. Banning the programme could adversely affect the way Northern Ireland would in future be reported.

Richard Francis said he had covered Northern Ireland as a producer, as Controller Northern Ireland and as Director News and Current Affairs. He had always sought to establish a responsible editorial framework against which interviews with supporters of terrorist organisations might on occasion be conducted. Any decision not to show the programme would make it difficult for James Hawthorne to maintain a criteria for taking such difficult decisions. Dick reminded the Governors of the situation in the Republic of Ireland where under 'Section 31' broadcasters were prevented from carrying out interviews with a number of organisations; it may well be that the Home Secretary was asking the BBC to implement an equivalent ban in Britain. The Chairman said that Governors had never opposed established journalistic principles; they simply did not like this particular programme!

Bill Cotton reminded the Board that the press coverage of the previous two days had arisen out of a 'press stunt' in which the Prime Minister had been trapped into answering a hypothetical question. Many responsible journalists had seen the programme at the previews and none had said it should not be shown. He was worried, he said, by the confrontation between Management and Governors. He warned of the likely effect on the morale of BBC journalists and producers.

Sir John Johnston said he was worried by the implications of the Home Secretary's letter and could now be persuaded to show the programme with amendments. The Chairman said he could detect that view amongst some Governors but the Vice-Chairman said that they had to take a decision 'one way or the other'. The programme was untruthful and misleading. Bill Cotton asked was it the programme or Martin McGuinness which had been untruthful? The Board was confusing the message with the messenger. The Vice Chairman said that the McGuinness interview could be compared to a concentration camp commandant being shown as a decent family man. Jocelyn Barrow said she detected other sinister messages in the programme; the British Army, and in particular a black soldier leading a patrol, had been made to look ridiculous. No additions, as outlined earlier by Brian Wenham, would affect the public's perception of the programme.

## THE SECOND VOTE

The Chairman then took a second vote. Who was 'implacably opposed' and who would accept the programme with amendments? The majority were in favour of a ban but Alwyn Roberts, alone amongst the Governors, asked that his dissent from the decision be recorded. Not to show the programme would be, he said, a 'grievous error'.

Needless to say, the entire group of BBC executives at the meeting were 'implacably opposed' to the action the Governors had taken but, being only there 'in attendance', we had no vote.

## WHAT TO SAY TO THE MEDIA

The meeting of the joint boards then went into recess while a press release was cobbled together. As managers we could now talk amongst ourselves. We could scarcely believe what had happened. Was it too late to defer the decision and wait for the return of the Director-General? At one stage I was in the corridor when the Chairman appeared. He was far from jovial. 'I'm dead!' he said and he shook his head ruefully.

The press release stated that the programme had been held up in order that the Board might discuss with the Home Secretary the 'profound issues raised in his letter to the BBC'. The Chairman's reply to the Home Secretary reiterated that point and added: 'We are anxious that those discussions be conducted in a neutral and dispassionate climate'.

'Having seen the programme,' the letter went on, 'it would be unwise for this programme.... to be transmitted in its present form: the programme's intention would continue to be misread and misinterpreted'.

That, in my view, was not only a gross misjudgement of the situation, it was also a falsehood; indeed a series of falsehoods. No new 'neutral and dispassionate climate' had now been created: far from it. The programme had been banned, not postponed. There was no intention to transmit it in some modified form. Nor had it been delayed so that the Governors could better defend the independence of the broadcaster. However they put it, the Governors had made a decision under pressure from the Home Secretary and against the considered advice of the most experienced and senior editors of the BBC. They had banned the programme because they disliked it. They had made liars of us all.

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

Finally we were summoned back into the Boardroom. The Chairman recognised that we would be disappointed by the Board's decision but asked that we should rally round at a time when the Corporation would be attacked from all sides. He specifically asked us to defend the decision in front of our subordinates. Bill Cotton said that that would not be possible. The Chairman and Governors reacted angrily.

Anger had been inevitable. I was now certain that contact between the two boards would quickly be lost. In the face of unparalleled media interest, each board would conduct its own defence. I was a member of neither and I calculated that more and more irrational blame might shift towards me personally. I reflected whether Management's tactics at the meeting had been good enough. Had we been too deferential? Suppose we had simply said 'no' to the Governors? Which side would have backed down? Why had Management condoned the press release and the letter to the Home Secretary? We had spent a whole day defining truth only to cast it aside for 'PR' purposes.

Tensions between the two Boards had been building up for many months and perhaps a shoot-out had been inevitable. Was the row really about Northern Ireland or about who was to run the BBC? There seemed, too, to be deep divisions within the Governors. William Rees-Mogg, not Stuart Young, had won the day. Perhaps the one thing that unified the Board of Governors was its collective lack of confidence in the Director-General Alasdair Milne and it must be said that confidence in Alasdair within his own Board of Management, and elsewhere within the BBC, was beginning to show some signs of cracking.

Yet I had not the slightest apprehension in personal terms. I was not shaken in my belief that the programme was sound and that all appropriate safeguards had been taken during its preparation. A slip-up in the London side of the procedures had been admitted but not established. That issue had absolutely no bearing on whether or not the British public should be allowed to see the programme. It had been previewed by an unprecedented number of senior staff, and by journalists, and their views had concurred with mine. Beyond that room on the third floor of Broadcasting House, I knew there were large numbers of professionals - the real BBC - who would despise the Governors' decision. For me, the fight had only begun.

## THE RETURN TO NORTHERN IRELAND

The problem now was to get back to Northern Ireland! At intervals during the day, messages had been sent to BH in Belfast, first to cancel the cocktail party for Lucy and then to put the dinner in her honour on hold. It would go ahead but Lucy and I would arrive late.

A taxi was procured to take us with all speed to Heathrow. Lucy, Watson Peat and I travelled together. I sat on one of the jump seats - protocol again! We talked continuously during the journey about the events of the day but skilfully managed to avoid the divisions of the final outcome. We settled for a semi-humorous 'Oh what a day' format and discussed both the frenetic attentions of the press and the social mayhem caused by the overrun of the meeting. At Heathrow a journalist spied us and some fragment of our conversation appeared later in a lesser Scottish newspaper.

Lucy and I had always got on well together and the flight to Belfast, where we sat side by side, and then the car journey from Aldergrove, posed no problems. We entered the elegant candle lit room in Broadcasting House where 'my dinner for Lucy' was in full swing. It was hard to say whether it was the candle light or the sight of the two cheerfully exhausted opponents which most dilated the pupils of the awaiting diners. Relieved and surprised that Lucy and I were still on speaking terms, and indeed on obviously good terms, this was a crisis, the greatest in the entire history of British broadcasting, to be savoured. How had the cocktail party been cancelled in time? What had been on the news? What were people saying? What actually happened at the meeting in London?

A curiously light-hearted dinner party came to an end. Many tributes and words of thanks had been exchanged. When the Faulkner entourage left, the first attack of the professional 'bends' was hitting me but I tried to analyse the situation with the remaining Management group. My wife was there too. BBC wives become expert on BBC issues. Patricia sensed that a hugely stupid and tragic decision had been taken by the Board. Why had we been unable to stop them? I advanced the theory that I had been observing a duel about a quarrel of long standing. I thought nevertheless that we might just about hold together and that we could find ways of isolating this particular incident from future editorial decisions. That turned out to be a somewhat unskilful display of managerial optimism! John Conway, Editor News and Current Affairs, was shaking his head. It was then I knew that all confidence in the BBC's integrity had been destroyed.

## RESIGNATION OFFERED

Next morning I took a few minutes on my own in the bedroom. I had gone to sleep the previous evening drained of all rational thought. My head was now clear. I would resign from the BBC. I told Patricia and daughter Fiona. I burst into tears. I think we were all in tears, but we were absolutely solid that to resign was the only honourable thing to do. I needed the free-

dom to tell the truth or, at the very least, to distance myself from the line the BBC was now following.

I planned to phone my decision to London from my own office. I would drive my BBC-provided car to Broadcasting House, but I should have to leave it there. Perhaps my own driver could drive me home again! Fiona said: 'Don't worry Dad we'll sell the house and we'll be all right.'

I put a call from my desk to Mike Checkland but he had gone on leave! The Chairman was at a golf match with Bill Cotton. Not sure who was actually running the BBC, I then rang Johnnie Wilkinson. Johnnie was dumbfounded. He was especially alarmed that I proposed to hold a press conference and he urged me to postpone everything for twenty four hours. When he had finished, Alan Protheroe rang with the same ardent request. I said I would not finalise my decision in writing for the time being but I gave notice that I would be my own man when I had to face reporters. I could not follow the party line as expressed in the press release. Protheroe understood.

The news of my resignation spread quickly throughout the BBC and by lunchtime it was on the radio. Messages of support from within the BBC and many significant pieces of advice from outside began to pour in; from the two Archbishops of Ireland, from the University, from the Harland and Wolff Chairman, from people of all ranks I did not even know. One of the first had been a telex from Aubrey Singer whose career as Managing Director Radio had been terminated in a famous BBC putsch:

'Whatever you decide Jimmy, there's life beyond the BBC.'

But the theme of the vast majority of the messages was 'Don't go'.

Meanwhile there was the matter of Lucy Faulkner's farewell in Studio One. It went ahead as planned. I made a speech in her honour and there was a presentation and she replied.

Late in the afternoon Dick Francis rang. He simply said he was at Heathrow on his way to see me. See me he did. Patricia and I had dinner with him at our home. Dick was just the company we needed. We raked over the coals of the previous days. He, too, wanted me to change my mind about resignation but it was not his style to force a single argument. Next morning he joined me in my office. Support from the unions and from colleagues added to the pressure to withdraw my resignation. A letter arrived from a member of the Broadcasting Council: 'Better on the inside pissing out...' it said.

Dick Francis had spent a lot of time on the phone to London and he specifically asked that the Chairman should speak to me. The reply was that the Chairman was going to issue a press statement expressing his confidence in BBC Management and that I would be included. In fact I knew that he was at the big pro-am golf match at Turbury and that once again another vacuous morale-boosting press release was on its way. I told Dick if that was the best the Chairman could do, I was finished with the BBC. Dick got back on the phone to London and at about one o'clock the Chairman rang me from the BBC Outside Broadcast scanner at the golf. He was very persuasive. He said that the BBC needed my experience and integrity more than ever before. It could ill afford to lose me at a time like this. 'I beg you, I beg you, I beg you to change your mind.'

I said that I understood his difficult position and that his telephoning meant much to me, for indeed it had. But I could not give him an answer. I had made my decision with my family and I would talk it through with them first. And whatever was to happen over the coming few days he had to accept that I could only speak the truth as I saw it. I would call a press conference at four o'clock and state my final decision.

## RESIGNATION WITHDRAWN

At the press conference I announced that I would withdraw my resignation. The news was conveyed to the Chairman.

It must be said that not everyone who rang me from within the London establishment of the BBC to persuade me not to resign did so because they valued the contribution I could continue to make! Some were more than a little exasperated by the stance I was taking. There must surely be other more suave, less emotional and less public ways of smoothing over internal difficulties. Some have later claimed that it was they who personally guided me back towards the path of good sense and mature behaviour. I had simply been playing Hamlet.

Perhaps so; but at least the Prince's suspicions about intrigues and mendacity in high places were rather well founded!

## 'IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES'

For the rest of the week, and well into the next, controversy raged. On the Sunday following I was invited for interview on Radio 4's 'The World this Week-End'. It had been complicated by an article in the Observer which had quoted me as saying that I believed the Governors had been 'high handed'. I had in fact said that they had been 'high minded'! So it was with per-

haps heightened interest that many members of the Board tuned in to hear what I had to say.

*[A transcript of that interview and another with Sir Hugh Greene is set out at the end of this weblog.]*

But after that broadcast I decided that I would say no more and I turned down invitations to appear in ITV's News at Ten and in a number of programmes here and abroad. Radio Television Hong Kong were planning a major feature in which I, their former Director, was to star! To their utter consternation, I turned them down. If I were pushed into a comment I would continue to say what I believed to be true. The governing and managing of the BBC seemed to be collapsing and I did not want to be seen to be stirring the pot. Even within Board of Management, quarrels and disagreements were becoming more evident. The Chairman had done a disastrous interview. He was incensed that his well constructed defence had actually been edited and the word in the newsrooms was that he would only give further interviews to ITN!

#### AFTERMATH

The rest of the Real Lives affair is well documented. When Alasdair Milne returned from holiday he viewed the film and approved it. The Board of Governors, with the Director General and some others in attendance, held another meeting one week later but the hard-liners again won the day. The ban continued, but for the second time that simple fact was well buried in the splendour of gubernatorial prose. 'The Board of Governors are the BBC,' they announced, 'and are therefore responsible for the editorial responsibility of the Corporation. They devolve the day-to-day management to a director-general, whom they appoint, who is editor-in-chief... The main issue is one of censorship by the government, which the Board does not accept.' They had not, they asserted, yielded to official pressure.

I was relieved that I was not asked to comment.

The Edinburgh International Television Festival was unusually well attended in 1985! The hottest ticket in town was for the session on Real Lives scheduled for 4 o'clock on Saturday 17th August. Aubrey Singer, who had written a blistering article in *The Listener*, was perhaps the star of the show. Brian Wenham, Michael Grade, my Scottish host Patrick Chalmers and I sat together near the back of the hall. The unanimous disapproval of the ban needed no help from us and my only contribution was to advance the view that the referral procedure issue had been a red herring.

Real Lives was transmitted on 16th October 1985. There were 'the usual phone calls' as I had predicted in June but no more than was normal for a programme of that kind. The difference was that a good proportion asked what the fuss had all been about.

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#### Footnotes:

1. The account of the Governor's meeting is based on the unedited minute taken by a member of the BBC Secretariat who was present at the meeting.

2. Several months later, after Michael Leapman's stirring account of the Real Lives affair was published, the Chairman greeted me warmly at a reception in London. Surprisingly he brought up the subject again. He had read Leapman and he chided me for keeping him waiting about the withdrawal of my resignation - according to Leapman I had made up my mind long before the Chairman had telephoned me on the fateful day and I had delayed telling him simply to keep him in suspense. I told the Chairman that Leapman had it slightly wrong. It was the Chairman, more than anyone else, who had persuaded me though I did delay 'telling the world' until much later in the afternoon. The point about first consulting my family seemed to touch him. He hoped, more than anything else, that the wounds had healed. Perfectly, I said. But the scar tissue remains.

3. At the time of my 'stand' for the programme I had been grateful for the support of my own staff and perhaps particularly of the Unions. On the 'day of action' they had organised a public showing of the video on the pavement outside Broadcast House. (Suspicion has fallen on me as the supplier of the tape and on that I claim both an inexplicable loss of memory and the right of silence.) Perhaps like me, the whole of the Northern Ireland staff felt that the dimensions of our broadcasting over the years had now been seen in sharp focus and better understood. It may be that our morale was actually strengthened as a result. Some of that heightened emotion rubbed off in a generalised, if slightly misdirected, support and, dare I say admiration, for what I had done. One evening, shortly after the crisis, I was walking along a corridor in BH at the other end of which was a chap with a mop and a bucket.

'I just want to say sir that that was a very brave thing you done. And anyway there are far too many of those oul IRA programmes on the television!'

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## REAL LIVES - AT THE EDGE OF THE UNION

On the Sunday following the meeting of the Board of Governors at which the programme had been banned, I was interviewed by Gordon Clough on Radio 4's 'World this Weekend'. On the previous evening, on another Radio 4 programme, there had been an interview with a former D-G and Governor of the BBC, Sir Hugh Greene. I had been unaware of Sir Hugh's interview when I faced Gordon Clough on the Sunday morning.

Both interviews are transcribed below; mine in full, Sir Hugh's in part.

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## INTERVIEW WITH SIR HUGH GREENE

In the introduction, the interviewer had posed the question whether the Governors' decision had left Sir Hugh happy or unhappy.

Sir Hugh:

It leaves me unhappy and disturbed even though, like the Home Secretary, I have not seen it. But it's a matter of principle.

Int:

You haven't seen the programme, but you've seen Mr Brittan's letter to the Chairman of the Board of Governors. And in that letter he says 'the programme would boost the morale of the IRA and its supporters and alarm the innocent majority' and he goes on to say that that's what's at issue. How do you take that argument?

Sir Hugh:

I think that that is a thoroughly ridiculous remark. How can a man who has not seen this programme possibly say that it will boost the morale of the IRA? I mean, it depends very largely on the nature of the interview. An interview doesn't necessarily lead to a favourable impression being given to the man being interviewed. I think myself of Ed Murrow's famous interview with Senator McCarthy. I dare say that President Eisenhower, or whoever it was at the time, would beforehand have wished the programme not to have taken place. In fact, Ed Murrow damaged McCarthy beyond repair. How can we know, how can Mr Brittan not having seen the programme know, that this programme would not do some damage, not only to the IRA, but also to the loyalists?

Int:

Quite clearly you do not like the decision but what about the decision to go ahead and attempt to screen a programme of this kind at a moment like this. Was that politically wise?

Sir Hugh:

Whether that was politically wise I have my doubts. If there was an overriding news, topical reason for showing the programme at the moment, I would say, certainly go ahead. But once a programme has been made, approved, and I gather for instance approved by the Controller Northern Ireland Jimmy Hawthorne, whose judgement I have very great confidence in, and we always in Irish, Northern Irish matters regarded the Controller Northern Ireland as the most important adviser; if he thinks it was all right, he must be convinced that it will not boost the morale of the IRA or any terrorist and I would have much more confidence in Jimmy Hawthorne than in Mr Leon Brittan..... The Board of Governors of the BBC should never be seen to be surrendering - and in spite of all the verbiage it is surrender - surrendering to Government pressures..... I think that they should not in any circumstances, Government and Governors, come too close together. They should sup with a long, long spoon.

Int:

Would you have been happier if the Government had come right out and said this must not be screened under any circumstances?

Sir Hugh:

If I had been a member of the Board of Governors or Director-General, I would have urged that what should be said to Mr Brittan is: 'You have power under paragraph 4 of clause 13 of the Licence and Agreement to stop this programme from appearing. We on our side have the right to say that you have done so. Go ahead and do it. If you don't use your powers, the programme goes out.' That, to my mind, would have been the right reply to Mr Brittan's letter.

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#### INTERVIEW WITH JAMES HAWTHORNE

In his introduction, Gordon Clough said that the papers that morning (Sunday) had raised the level to that of a major accident inquiry. The press had reported 'irreconcilable differences'. The TIMES, having had leaks from the Governors, had said that the programme had been not properly referred by James Hawthorne and on the London side. Very much at the centre of the row, he said, was James Hawthorne, to whom he had spoken earlier. He had asked him about allegations that referral and consultation procedures had not been properly followed.

Hawthorne:

First of all, in the papers this morning, there are inaccuracies about the sequence of events, but categorically, nothing went wrong. And anyway, with respect, that's a red herring: at the point when the Governors sat down to deliberate and take their very difficult decision, they knew what Controller Northern Ireland's view was, and what Alan Protheroe's view was. And in this instance, they knew the views of the entire Board of Management.

And even if Alan Protheroe, as Assistant Director-General, had seen it on a Thursday or a Friday or a month earlier, his reaction would have been - if he'd been told by his Department at a particular time - 'Is Northern Ireland happy about it? Is James Hawthorne happy about it? Has he seen it?' And when the answer to that would have been yes; he too would have been happy.

Clough:

When the Board of Governors eventually, and against the advice of the Board of Management, saw the film at the beginning of the week, some of them - indeed all of them - thought it was a programme that should not be broadcast. Lady Faulkner in particular, who was then the Northern Ireland Governor, said very scathing things about it giving a sanitised picture of the terrorist, the man who goes murdering on Monday and goes to church on Sunday.

Hawthorne:

Well my views on the programme are already very well known. I think it's a very sad programme; it's a very revealing programme. Clearly I think it's an important programme and my view must be that it certainly doesn't sanitise terrorism. What it's about is this: two young men from the same city, now in the Northern Ireland Assembly, who, through the central tragedy of Northern Ireland politics, have gone their separate ways. They're now poles apart. They are irreconcilable. That is what this programme is about. And I think that's what the public should know about if they want to begin to understand the essence of Northern Ireland politics.

Clough:

Well the Home Secretary, writing a letter to the Chairman without, it must be said, the benefit of having seen the programme, feared that it would give the terrorist a valuable platform - again that phrase again 'the oxygen of publicity'. Is that not an arguable point, and does not the Home Secretary have the right to express a view?

Hawthorne:

Well he has a right to express a view! The situation in Northern Ireland is more complicated than to be handled by an aphorism like 'the oxygen of publicity'. I mean we could talk about the Hydrogen Sulphide of politics or the Sodium Bicarbonate of decision. It simply doesn't describe the intricacies of the problem. The Home Secretary also said that, even if this programme were to show the terrorists - the terrorists, not the elected representatives - the terrorists in a wholly bad light, we still shouldn't go ahead with the programme. Now I think a problem facing the Home Secretary and indeed the Government is to get their own definition clear of who are elected politicians and who are terrorists. You see, the Prime Minister herself, talking about the BBC's decision, made the very strong point - or rather she made a point very strongly - that these people can air their views in the Northern Ireland Assembly. They don't need to be on programmes because she knows that they are abstentionists. But then also the SDLP, that is, John Hume's party, are abstentionist. Now is she saying, by the same reasoning, that we shouldn't allow John Hume and the SDLP on the air? Now this is where I am not confused, but I think the Government has to sort out where its thinking lies in these matters.

Clough:

Well the film was discussed before they saw it, by the Governors, and then they saw it, and then, from what reports we read, there was near unanimity that the Home Secretary's request should be agreed to. You're quoted in one paper this morning as

saying that the Governors have taken a decision, the world is calling them into question, and naturally they've got to find other reasons to justify their high handedness. A very strong expression.

Hawthorne:

Not only is it a strong expression, it's a total misquote! What we were talking about, in a general conversation, was about high mindedness. But 'highmindedness' means this, and this is what I said:

'I'm not in the slightest doubt, and I don't want to be misunderstood on the point, that the BBC Board of Governors took their decision with the utmost integrity and with the reputation of the BBC and its standards in mind. I was present and I know the agony that they suffered. They took the best possible decision that they felt should be taken.'

But I have to go on record as simply saying that, though they have been vulnerable to misunderstanding by the public, I'm in basic disagreement with that decision. And it was on that issue that I offered my resignation.

Clough:

There have of course been these other broadcasters, in the Soviet Union, and in the Soviet bloc and Libya and elsewhere, who've seen this as a great opportunity to attack the BBC's claim to be independent of Government. Do you think that harm has been done to the BBC's reputation and that the harm could be lasting?

Hawthorne:

Well I think people have jumped on the bandwagon, obviously. I hope that the reputation of the BBC will not suffer. I very much fear that the perception of that reputation - which is almost as important - will suffer. Now I was a Director-General of an overseas broadcasting organisation for nearly eight years and I know the way the BBC's reputation is perceived. And we did warn the Governors, when this decision was being taken, that, whether we liked it or not, the banning of the programme would lead, at the very least, to great misunderstanding about the whole character of the BBC. And I feel particularly sad about that damage, because it's just a programme. We've got to realise that we are at the centre of attention and therefore vulnerable to gross misunderstanding of our intent.