



MARTIN KEEPS THE SHIP STEADY DURING A STORMY WEEK IN WHITE HOUSE



Gabija Gataveckaite, in Washington, writes that the Taoiseach wasn't in the US to win over Donald Trump – he was there to keep the peace

Under the second coming of 'The Donald', Micheál Martin anxiously took his seat in the Oval Office. After missing out on meeting former president Joe Biden face-to-face when he was last taoiseach due to Covid, this was meant to be Martin's moment. Just days before the highly anticipated meeting, an unprecedented row broke out between the US president and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, so the pressure was on. He didn't have to do what former taoiseach Bertie Ahern suggested — stare at the ceiling if Trump made things difficult, just as the former Fianna Fáil leader said he did during tense moments in Northern Ireland peace negotiations. The Taoiseach arrived in the US for one of the most crucial meetings of his career with one of the most unpredictable and volatile presidents amid a tense dynamic for Ireland and the world. He was briefed by officials "to within an inch of his life", particularly after collective jaws dropped during that meeting with Zelensky when Trump furiously accused him of "gambling with World War III". At 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the returning resident to the White House has deployed a billionaire to sack count-

less civil servants who have packed up and left the city or are scrambling to find jobs elsewhere. Amid threats of tariffs, layoffs and a looming recession, the Irish in Washington are anxious. Some of them have been "DOGE'd" — sacked by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, their roles having been deemed a waste of taxpayer money. One US business lobbyist says while American companies are happy with Trump's direction, their issues are with "how stuff is done". "The contacts we had within state departments... we don't even know if they have jobs any more," they said. And even though Trump ranted and raved about Ireland taking "advantage" of the US and promised to take back what was "stolen" from the US, both Irish and American businesspeople privately acknowledge this will be very hard to do in four years. "It's very hard to do that in less than 10 years," says one. "How do you even do that?" "The Irish have no say here," said an Irish lobbyist based in Washington. "Things are terrible here. Nothing makes sense. They'll be coming for the Apple money, too." Since Trump's re-election last November, the Irish Government hasn't hid its

fears as to what lay over the horizon. While an EU tariff war looms, so does the possibility of luring US multinationals away — and with them, corporation tax receipts vital to the stability of the Irish economy. **Ireland and the US clash on many things.** Chief among those are foreign affairs policies, especially the stance on Gaza. With Ireland being viewed as one of the most pro-Palestinian countries in Europe, this stood starkly in comparison to America's support for Israel and funding the atrocities in Gaza. While Ireland has been hugely supportive of Ukraine, Trump has been especially coy on any interactions he has had recently with Russian president Vladimir Putin, refusing to answer reporters when he was asked when was the last time they spoke on the phone. Martin made it clear he would lay out the official Irish position on these issues. But he wasn't there to convince or win over Trump. It was his job to keep the peace, and he impressed upon him Ireland's record on negotiating peace deals. In the Oval Office, he was smiling shyly and he laughed at Trump's opening joke about Martin being prime minister, but then later coming back as Taoiseach. "Heard about that, happens on occasion," joked the US president, referring to his own loss in 2020. The room was packed with officials, camera operators, photographers and journalists. In the hustle and bustle, reporters were pulled back by White House handlers and the Secret Service. One Irish reporter even accused the US side of assault. Strict rules are in place within the Oval Office with its surreal almost TV-set like set-up. The Irish travelling media delegation was told bluntly that no

livestreaming of footage from the Oval Office was allowed. However, the RTÉ News channel streamed the entire meeting, with the Irish public being able to view the 50-minute tete-a-tete in real time. A spokesperson for RTE said their crew in Washington did not live stream the meeting, but live pooled footage was fed back into the newsroom in Dublin "with no indication attached that it was not to be used live". "It was therefore carried live by the RTÉ News channel on the day inadvertently," said the spokesperson. They added the broadcaster has not heard anything from the White House on breaking the live streaming rule. Viewers also got to see the bizarre way Trump conducts his Oval Office bilateral meetings. They are mostly all public press conferences, with him in charge. He selects the reporters who ask him questions and takes his time. The private part of their time together, where it would be presumed the "real work" between the two leaders gets done, lasted only around 10 minutes. The two also got to share a lift from the White House to the Speaker's lunch on Capitol Hill, leaving the Taoiseach's advisers impressed that Martin was afforded such a rare privilege to be in-

vited into the Trump-mobile, known as The Beast. Trump asked the Taoiseach about Northern Ireland and the peace process and how it may help him while dealing with the conflict in Gaza. At the Speaker's lunch, Trump read out remarks prepared for him. His notes included a statistic on how more than half of all recipients of the Congressional medal of honour have been Irish. The award is the United States Armed Forces' highest military decoration and is awarded to recognise American soldiers and sailors. "I'm going to have to check that, that sounds... that sounds like an awfully good statistic," he told congressmen and congresswomen. **Speaking a few minutes later at the podium,** Martin said all the statistics Trump quoted are "absolutely verifiable". But Trump wasn't convinced. He quoted the figures again at the shamrock reception later that night and said how he wanted to "check on that". He assigned the task to his attorney general: "Pam, would you please have that investigated? Because how is that possible?" He then asked Mary Martin, the Taoiseach's wife, how it was possible. "Of course it's possible," she fired back. As well as the St Patrick's Day reception at the White House, businesspeople attended a dinner hosted by Ibec, a breakfast event hosted by the American Chamber at the five-star DuPont Circle hotel, a business leaders' lunch at the Omni Shoreham Hotel attended by the Taoiseach and most also went to the \$1,000 (€915)-a-plate Ireland Funds gala dinner. However, the week of networking proved tricky for some. While the invites

to the White House reception were exclusive, even tighter were the invites for a Stripe event at the Riggs Hotel, with some figures annoyed they didn't make the guestlist. Surprising winners last week were the DUP. With Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the Alliance parties in Northern Ireland boycotting the White House, the DUP got untethered access to the US president. Deputy first minister Emma Little-Pengelly called the trip "incredibly fruitful" and said she had "significant conversations" with the US president at the Speaker's lunch. DUP Communities Minister Gordon Lyons and Northern Ireland Assembly Speaker Edwin Poots also attended the event in Capitol Hill. Little-Pengelly was spotted smoking a cigarette outside the gala Ireland Funds dinner but once her taxi arrived, she stubbed it out and brought it with her to finish smoking later. Much to the delight of the Taoiseach and the DUP, the losers of the week seemed to be Sinn Féin. In the Oval Office, Trump was asked about the White House boycotts. But he told reporters it was a non-story: "I haven't heard that, I really haven't heard that." Party leader Mary Lou McDonald only reared her head to appear in a booklet by the American Chamber of Commerce distributed to business heads at the US Chamber of Commerce fireside chat with the Taoiseach. Entitled *Succeeding Together*, it outlines the trade relationships between the two countries and the main political players. Despite being a critic of Trump, McDonald wrote: "Much has been said about the potential impact on the US Irish economic relationship from President Trump's return to office. "However, I am certain that the shared commitment of our countries of prosperity, progress, innovation and growth

Much to the delight of the Taoiseach and the DUP, the losers of the week were SF

Micheál played a blinder with the bogeyman in Oval Office



Taoiseach established a good personal relationship with the US president, who made some good points himself, writes Shane Ross

Last Wednesday, the US president was likely to be in foul form. Wall Street was in freefall and Europe had just announced tit-for-tat tariffs against the US. As bad luck would have it, the Taoiseach was the first European leader in the White House since US-European relations tanked. The antagonistic, anti-European US vice-president JD Vance was billed to join Donald Trump in the Oval Office. A few days earlier, Tánaiste Simon Harris had stirred the fragile pot in an unnecessary spat with US secretary of state Marco Rubio. As if that weren't enough, Enoch Burke's family of evangelists had flown to Washington, brandishing placards. So it looked like a bad day to chum around with the president. And yet, in the event, Micheál Martin played a blinder.

He fully abided by the unwritten rules for meetings with the media in the Oval Office. The guest is not the focus of interest — the president is the ringmaster. The visiting dignitary is simply the decorative pretext for Trump to lay down the law on world affairs. If the attending press wish to ask the invitee a question, that is fine, but Trump will probably answer it himself or divert it in any direction he wishes. The exchanges with the fourth estate are as long or short as the president decides. He picks which journalist will speak. He opens and closes the meeting. Wednesday's event was pretty chaotic, with lots of roaring and shouting from the media mob trying to land a question. The format played straight into Micheál's hands. He needed to say as little as possible. Every topic was a minefield, but

it was soon clear there was no plan to ambush Micheál in a Trump-Vance pincer movement. At first he found it impossible to get a word in edgeways. Trump was not in foul form, but in fine fettle, seizing the opportunity to pontificate and to praise his deferential guest. How might Micheál chip in? Could he interrupt a president in full flow? He waited patiently. He held his nerve, taking his first real opportunity to mention his long record on the Middle East. He took care to acknowledge Trump's own commitment to peace. **He was not afraid to tackle the thorny tariff issue,** politely countering the US narrative with mentions of Ryanair and AerCap and their purchasing power in the US. Trump listened, nodded and moved on. The president was not particularly interested, but there was no hint of conflict, let alone an eruption. Micheál said the bare minimum, but just enough, comfortable in the knowledge that his host was busting a gut to recapture the centre of the stage. Yet it would be inadequate to limit our congratulations to Micheál Martin purely for achieving his primary objective — an escape from any confrontation. He made tangible progress on other fronts. He established an excellent personal relationship with



● Taoiseach Micheál Martin did not put a foot wrong during his White House meeting with Donald Trump last week, according to Shane Ross Trump by listening, ducking, diving and delivering a fair dose of subtle flattery. When he addressed peace, particularly in Northern Ireland, he name-checked a Republican president, Ronald Reagan, as a peacemaker, but somehow managed to omit Democrats like Kennedy, Clinton or Obama. He even tactfully avoided mentioning Joe Biden, whose praises he was singing during his state visit to Ireland less than two years ago. Ireland is now rapidly plugging in to Republican America. Micheál began to rebalance our hitherto lop-

sided partisan, political relationships with the US. More importantly, the Taoiseach may have convinced Trump to see Ireland through a different lens from his hostile vision of the rest of the EU. Martin's frequent positive references to Trump's Doonbeg property was a winner with the president. When I was in government (2016-2020), Leo Varadkar set up several cabinet meetings in suitable venues outside Dublin. Micheál could do worse than consider Doonbeg. However, perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the meeting was the glimpse the Taoiseach and the Irish

people caught of Trump in action. The bogeyman actually made a few good points. Dare we admit it, but are some of his ambitions perfectly legitimate? Put aside the madness of eyeing Greenland or Canada as the 51st state; his attitude to military defence funding is, at least sometimes, patently reasonable. He rightly feels that the US has borne more than its fair share of the costs of defending faraway Europe for too long. Micheál was upbraided for laughing at a harmlessly carefree remark by Trump about Ireland's housing problem. Some critics are deeply disappointed the meeting lacked rancour, or even that it never fulfilled their wildest dreams of a disaster. The begrudging left must be deeply disappointed that the visit was such a phenomenal success. Ireland is in a good place after Micheál's visit to the Oval Office. If the tariff war, the trade deficit and the tax rates are solved by dialogue and negotiation, Ireland is in a better position than those who have rattled their sabres at a powerful president. The Taoiseach's conduct at the meeting was masterly in its diplomacy and consistent with his resolve to save jobs and protect the economy. Last week, we were lucky to have him.



MICHEÁL MARTIN AND DONALD TRUMP

TAOISEACH DISPLAYS ‘SELF-SOOTING’ BEHAVIOURS AND CLASSIC STRESS RESPONSES BODY-LANGUAGE EXPERT ON MARTIN’S TENSE MEETING WITH TRUMP

Actions often speak louder than words – particularly in strained political moments – and Micheál Martin’s eagerly awaited Oval Office meeting with US president Donald Trump has been dissected by the public,

political anoraks and parties. Below, Chase Hughes, the world’s leading behaviour expert and a bestselling author, analyses some of the key moments with NIAHM HORAN – and reveals what the body language says.



MIRRORING SAME POSTURE AND SYNCHRONISED MOVEMENTS

1: Taoiseach Micheál Martin tells Trump foreign investment is a two-way street

Key takes: Mirroring and social approval

“Right from the start, Trump and Martin are mirroring each other’s body language — same posture, even synchronised movements. The thing is, this is Trump’s natural style, so it’s likely Martin is unconsciously matching him. That’s a pretty common thing in social interactions, especially for people who have spent their lives in politics. It helps build rapport, but it also subtly reinforces who’s leading the interaction — in this case, Trump.

“Then there’s an interesting moment when Trump cuts in with something like, ‘I’ll trade...’, while Martin is still talking. At the same time, he scans the room, looking for reactions from the press. That’s a classic social approval check — he’s making sure the crowd is with him.

“The problem? He does it while Martin is still speaking, which makes Martin seem less in control of the moment. This really highlights the difference in how they communicate: Trump plays to the whole room, always working to control the broader energy. Martin is more focused on the direct conversation, which can make him seem less dominant in comparison.”



APPROVAL CHECK TRUMP SCANS THE ROOM LOOKING FOR REACTION

2: Trump says he doesn’t want to do anything to hurt Ireland

Key takes: Power moves and nervous energy

“When Trump starts talking about how he could ‘drain Ireland of its companies’, but insists the US doesn’t want to hurt Ireland, that’s something called a potential harm reminder. Basically, it’s a way of saying: ‘I don’t want this bad thing to happen... but it totally could.’ It’s a power move — a way to keep leverage without being outright aggressive.

“Martin’s reaction is telling. He starts tapping his foot, which isn’t something he usually does. That’s a classic stress response. When adrenaline and cortisol spike from tension, the body looks for ways to release that energy — fast breathing, fidgeting or, in this case, foot tapping. It’s like an unconscious way of burning off nervous energy.

“In any social interaction, you can usually tell who’s in charge by looking at three things: 1. Who’s reacting less? The less reactive person has more control. 2. Who moves slower? Confident, dominant people don’t rush. 3. Who needs less from the interaction? The person who’s least dependent on the other for approval or outcomes is usually leading. In this case, Trump isn’t just talking — he’s setting the pace, while Martin is adjusting.”



FOOT TAPPING CLASSIC STRESS RESPONSE



SELF-SOOTING PACIFYING HAND MOVEMENTS

3: Trump says Ireland has a housing crisis because we are doing so well

Key takes: Martin’s stress signals

“When Trump starts talking about Ireland’s housing crisis, Martin starts showing a lot of pacifying behaviours in a very short time: rubbing his hands on his legs; adjusting his posture; crossing and uncrossing his legs; clasping his hands tightly; laughing right after certain statements. And all in just nine seconds. That’s a lot of subconscious self-soothing, which usually

means a person is feeling uncomfortable or under pressure.

“One big factor here? Martin is a politician, and Trump isn’t one in the traditional sense. Trump doesn’t follow the usual diplomatic script — he’s never been someone who adjusts to seek approval. Instead, he forces other people to adjust to him. That creates a tough dynamic for someone like Martin, who has spent his career in structured, predictable political exchanges.”

4: Trump compliments Martin’s suit

Key takes: Physical contact and confidence

“Right away, Trump makes physical contact — a move that some experts call a tactic, but for naturally dominant people it’s second nature. He’s done this consistently, even with people like Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi Crown Prince — someone no one is supposed to casually touch. But Trump does it anyway.

“Martin, on the other hand, looks way more comfortable when he’s addressing the press. You can literally see his body relax — his hands stop fidgeting, his posture opens up. That’s because when people feel tense, their hands almost always betray them.

“If you ever want to know what someone is really feeling, watch their hands — they’ll show tension even when the face doesn’t.”



OPENING UP MARTIN IS MORE COMFORTABLE ADDRESSING THE PRESS



OVERALL TAKEAWAY: WHO’S REALLY IN CONTROL?

“Throughout this whole interaction, Martin is constantly adjusting — his posture, his movements, his expressions. That’s a sign of someone under pressure, trying to adapt to a fast-moving, unpredictable situation.

“When people are uncomfortable, their instinct is to look more comfortable — to force the right body language, to ‘play it cool’. But that’s the wrong approach.

“The real trick? Finding a mental state where you actually are comfortable, where the stress of the situation doesn’t matter as much as just being present in the moment. That’s the difference here. Trump isn’t adjusting — he’s being himself, setting the tone and making others

adjust to him. And that’s why, even if you strip away the words, you can tell who’s running the show just by watching their body language.”

Chase Hughes (right) is author of the bestselling book on persuasion, influence and behaviour profiling, *The Ellipsis Manual*, and is a former US navy chief. He trains military units, intelligence organisations, businesses, police and corporate executives in rapid behaviour profiling and enhanced persuasion techniques.



● Micheál Martin speaking at the Ireland Funds gala dinner in Washington last week. Picture by Níall Carson/PA

Impact of Trump’s tariffs would be ‘awful’ – IDA chief

Continued from page 1

say a lot of us coming over were just uncertain about how it would play out,” he said.

“On Wednesday in the Oval Office there was a real positive sense of engagement, not just between the US president and the Taoiseach, but between all the officials. And that counts, because it does flow through to the system here.

“The big plus from this is the message that Ireland is still seen as good friends of the US, and we were well received.

“Does that mean we can rest on our laurels? No, we can’t.

“While it’s brilliant to be able to bank the fact that the relationships are very strong, we need to keep emphasising the message we’ve been emphasising for the last few weeks — that Ireland is good for those American companies. It’s good for the US stock market.”

Mr O’Rourke said the US administration knows US pharma companies “can’t just pick up the plants they have in Ireland and walk them back to the US”.

“They want them to invest future dollars in the US. Despite all that’s happened in the week, I’m probably more positive at the end of the week than I was at the beginning.

“I wasn’t sure, you know, if there would be a frostier reception in Washington for Ireland. There absolutely isn’t.”

He said he was also in support of the Taoiseach’s comments on cutting red tape in the EU to boost competitiveness.

A separate source who was in high-level meetings with US bosses last week said: “There was no anti-Ireland sentiment, and that was a big relief over the course of the week.

“But there is a big issue with the EU. We picked that up from the Oval Office and in every conversation we had right across the administrative and the political system.

“And the US has a lot of grievances with Europe. But the European market is really important for US businesses — that’s the other thing that came out of our meetings.”

Meanwhile, Ireland is working to ease barriers between the UK and the EU on trade.

The Taoiseach said the situation between the UK and the US is not clear yet, and if the UK “does well, Ireland will do well economically”.

“We’re working to facilitate an ease in barriers between the UK and the EU on trade, consistent with the agreements that have been arrived at between the UK and the EU,” Mr Martin said.

“Ireland’s relationship with Britain is still very strong economically, it’s still a very strong market for us.

“So, if the UK economy picks up in whatever shape or form, or for whatever reason, Ireland will benefit from that.”

A White House boycott by Sinn Féin, the SDLP and Alliance Party was irrelevant and ineffective, DUP leader Gavin Robinson has claimed.

Separately, the *Sunday Independent* has learned that a top US politician advised Sinn Féin on how to handle its boycott of the White House as part of St Patrick’s Day events in the US.

Senior Democratic congressman Richard Neal advised Sinn Féin against publicly criticising the Taoiseach for going to the White House. Sinn Féin is understood to have contacted friendly members of the US Congress before announcing its decision to boycott this year’s celebrations.

Mr Neal is understood to have warned the party against being overly critical of the Taoiseach, but encouraged it to “stick to their beliefs”.

The Sinn Féin leadership said it wouldn’t be attending the Speaker’s Lunch in the White House, despite having done so in recent years, as “a principled stance against the threat of mass expulsion of the Palestinian people from Gaza”.

However, notably, Sinn Féin did not criticise the Taoiseach for travelling to Washington, saying he should make the trip but confront the US president over his “dangerous” rhetoric on Gaza.

are what will drive investment between Ireland and the United States over the next five years.”

In his contribution, Tánaiste Simon Harris mentions that he is Tánaiste and Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister no less than three times.

Despite intense speculation that the controversial family of Enoch Burke would be attending some of the week’s events — after Elon Musk expressed support for the family on his social media platform days prior — the family were stuck to protesting nearby the White House with their posters.

They also turned up at the Ireland Funds gala and despite loudly berating arriving Irish media, they managed to slip in as the speeches took place.

Forcibly thrown out outside, shoeless and shouting loudly about their son Enoch Burke, stood mother Martina and her two children, Isaac and Ammi.

Martina was telling the media how Enoch was imprisoned “for not approving transgender ideology” when Ammi interjected.

“And now, they’re stripping Enoch Burke of his salary,” she said. But she made the mistake of speaking over Martina, who was in full flow. Martina nudged her daughter, prompting her to be quiet, as the mother closed her eyes and shook her head in annoyance.

As they again went on to refuse to answer questions and continue to berate the media, the Burkes whispered to one another on occasion with phrases and ideas for what to say next.

After Martina Burke told journalists to go work in Asda or go stock shelves instead, the trio sauntered off into the dark city streets away from cameras.

The Taoiseach later dubbed the incident “regrettable” and said there is a “proper” way to protest.

All in a week’s work.



DAVID QUINN IN THE OPINION PAGES ‘WE SHOULD CHANGE OUR TRADITIONAL BIAS AND ENCOURAGE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE REPUBLICAN PARTY. BOTH TRUMP AND HIS CAUCUSES NOW HAVE VERY STRONG SUPPORT IN IRISH-AMERICA’ SEE PAGE 23

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