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Brief for Taoiseach's visit to U.S. May, 1978

Northern Ireland and U.S.

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The Irish-American Community

1. Americans of Irish descent number at least 13 millions. The ancestors of most of them came to the U.S. in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. As an ethnic community they have had outstanding success in improving their position economically and socially with the passing generations and are now said to be the second most successful ethnic group in the U.S. With their rising success their interest in Irish political problems and their self-identification as a separate Irish community in the U.S. has declined and the overwhelming majority of Irish-Americans have little or no interest in the problem of Northern Ireland or indeed in other Irish problems.

2. A small but active minority of Irish-Americans is seriously involved with the problem and many in this minority, taking a simplistic and emotional view of Northern Ireland, have supported the cause and the violence of the Provisional IRA in recent years. Those Irish-Americans who interest themselves in Irish affairs or who actively participate in Irish organisations such as the GAA, AOH, Emerald Societies and county organisations are mostly Irish born or have Irish parents. With the end to Irish emigration to the U.S. and the decline in serious Irish-American interest in Irish affairs, the membership of these groups has dwindled to a fraction of its strength at the turn of the century, while the average age of the members has continued to rise. The total number of persons involved with these organisations is thought to be about 100,000. It is in this group that support for the Provisional IRA exists most strongly. On the one hand, the Provisional IRA look to these Irish-Americans for moral and financial support as well as weapons. On the other hand, Irish-Americans in this group are almost the only category of Irish-Americans who continually parade themselves as such and, to that extent, vociferous support on their part for violence in Ireland can be and has been confused by American politicians and the public generally as representative of an enormous Irish-American constituency and/or of the feelings of the Irish in Ireland.

3. If one may use the term "the Irish-American community" in this restricted sense to signify the tiny minority of Irish-Americans referred to above, it is true that it has shown a good deal of concern with the situation in Northern Ireland, particularly since 1972 and this concern has been exploited quite successfully by the Provisionals and their U.S. front organisations, the Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAI) and the Irish National Caucus (see separate notes). Members of the community have in general a strong emotional attachment to Ireland and have demonstrated considerable loyalty to their country of origin, especially as tourists. They comprise a crucial proportion of transatlantic passengers to Ireland. Their loyalty, however has never extended to Irish institutions of Government, especially so far as the issue of Irish nationalism is concerned. It is not in most cases a question of active hostility to Irish Governments but rather an abiding Irish-American tradition of hating Britain and of seeing in her the malevolent cause of their own or their parents' emigration. Violence in Northern Ireland is seen to involve two protagonists only, i.e. Provisional IRA idealists and British Army thugs. Attempts, however rational or courteous, to debunk this myth are seen as attacks on Irish-American values and as such on the community itself. The myth is prized for its emotional rather than intellectual value and rational argument especially from a viewpoint which is not explicitly hostile to Britain seems only to consolidate the hold of the traditional hostility on the Irish-American imagination. In dealing with Irish-Americans results are easier to win than arguments. Any attempt, therefore, to promote good relations with the Irish-American community based on mutual respect and to minimise the damage that Irish-Americans do in relation to the Northern Ireland situation must take account of the community's sensitivities and prejudices.

4. The Irish-American community exemplifies many of the attitudes and problems of an emigre community in the U.S.: many of its members (i.e. those who qualify under the definition suggested at the outset) feel socially and culturally insecure and yet they share a strong sense of their own history based on grievances, lost opportunities and hard-won achievements. To the Government of their country of origin their attitude might be rationalised in these terms:

"We owe you nothing. You could not even provide us with a job." They like, moreover, to affect an attitude of superiority in some matters to people "at home" and it irks many of them to hear of Irish economic development because that suggests that the personal and cultural sacrifice of emigration was pointless. Many of the Irish-born working-class emigrants feel that Irish State and semi-State activities in the U.S. are geared only to the white-collar middle-class Irish from whom they feel deeply separated and this carries over into their attitude to distinguished visitors from Ireland who, they feel, shun them or despise them. They tend to cling closely to a familiar system of historic myths of British repression and Irish failure which provides them with a history, an identity and a cause. Northern Ireland provides a focus for all of this. Some of them see the Republic, its Government and to a lesser extent its people, as having betrayed their cause.

5. While few Irish-Americans will accept a didactic message from Dublin as to whom they should endorse or support, it is possible to harness their assumptions and appeal to their concerns, for example by emphasising the hope of seeing the coming together of the Irish people and the need for reconciliation between the communities in Northern Ireland as necessary first steps.

6. There is moreover little doubt that Irish-Americans (especially those in this category) like to be congratulated on their achievements in the U.S. and to be told of the inspiration their success provides to those at home to solve their problems openly, democratically and rationally.

Department of Foreign Affairs

May 1978

U.S. Political Scene and Northern Ireland

Introduction

1. During the past 18 months the problem of Northern Ireland has received an unprecedented amount of attention in U.S. political circles. It is a fact that, despite the strength and efforts of the Irish Congressional lobby in Washington over several generations, all U.S. Administrations, Democratic and Republican, had hitherto maintained an attitude of strict neutrality and non-involvement with the issue. On August 30, 1977, however, President Carter, as a result of pressure from the highly influential quartet, O'Neill, Kennedy, Carey and Moynihan (who had over several months worked in close consultation with the Irish Government and also Mr. John Hume), issued a policy statement breaking with this tradition in which he expressed U.S. support for a power-sharing solution and a U.S. commitment to provide economic assistance to Northern Ireland in the event of a political solution. On the other hand, supporters of the Provisional IRA have changed the emphasis of their efforts from fund-raising through Noraid, which is in decline, to political lobbying through the Irish National Caucus. Utilising Congressman Mario Biaggi as their frontman, they established an informal Congressional Committee which has had no influence on the Administration and now seems itself in decline. During his election campaign, President Carter responded to pressure from representatives of the Irish National Caucus by agreeing to a meeting with Caucus supporters in Pittsburg. Subsequent to his taking office, Caucus supporters attempted during February 1977 to set up meetings with a wide range of administration officials. Although they had some limited success, the Carter Administration accepted that the Caucus attitude to violence in Ireland was such that there should be no further contact with them and, at a meeting on 16 March 1977, President Carter assured the then Minister for Foreign Affairs that contacts would not recur. In a communiqué issued jointly by Secretary of State Vance and Dr. FitzGerald on 17 March 1977 a call was made to the Irish and American people not to be deceived by those who claimed to speak for human rights in Ireland but whose true purpose was to promote violence.

St. Patrick's Day Statement 1977

2. In the early part of 1977, the supporters of the Provisional IRA maintained an intensive campaign of lobbying U.S. politicians to win support for their viewpoint or at least to achieve a position where they could claim in Ireland to have influential contacts in the U.S. Administration and Congress. The Provisional IRA political campaign in the United States suffered a series of reverses in 1977 beginning with a call for an end to violence in Ireland from four U.S. political leaders of Irish descent and of outstanding national importance, Kennedy, O'Neill, Moynihan and Carey. The text of this appeal is in Annex I. Senator Kennedy and the Governor of the State of New York Carey followed this initiative by major speeches on Northern Ireland on similar lines in New York and Dublin respectively.

Statement by President Carter

3. A further set-back for the U.S. supporters of the Provisional campaign was the statement issued by President Carter on 30 August 1977 in which he called for an end to violence and asked Americans to refrain from providing financial or other support to organisations involved in violence. In that statement President Carter said that the United States would support a solution "that involves both parts of the community of Northern Ireland, protects human rights and guarantees freedom from discrimination - a solution that the people of Northern Ireland as well as the Governments of Great Britain and Ireland can support". He promised that, in the event of such a settlement being reached the U.S. Government would consider how additional job creating investment could be encouraged in Northern Ireland. The text of this statement, together with the Irish Government reaction, is in Annex II. The statement was also welcomed by the British Government and by the four Irish-American political leaders, on whose initiative it was released and in consultation with whom it had been drafted.

The formulation of the President's policy had proceeded over several months and took the following form. The initiative was formally taken by the four Democratic leaders of Irish descent who co-ordinated their approach at every step with the Irish Government. This relationship was well known both to the Executive, i.e. State Department and White House - as well as to the British, although it

was never formally acknowledged by either. Detailed diplomatic negotiations subsequently took place with both Governments. The permanent levels of the Administration and notably the State Department in keeping with tradition, strongly backed British efforts first of all to quash and later, acknowledging the reality of O'Neill's enormous influence with Carter, to limit the range of the statement. It must be said that the statement that emerged on 30 August, although unprecedented in committing the Administration to an eventual role in helping solve the problem, nevertheless fell short of the desiderata of the Irish Government and the four U.S. politicians. In short, Irish Government influence as exercised through the four leaders had proved to be, for the first time on this issue, very considerable but not absolute. Finally, it is worth noting that President Carter in his tribute to O'Neill screened at the Ireland Fund dinner on May 10 formally acknowledged the Speaker's role in formulating Administration policy on Northern Ireland.

(On 18 March 1976, the then Taoiseach and President Ford of the U.S. had in a joint communiqué "appealed to the American and Irish people to refrain from supporting with finance or other aid this violence.")

St. Patrick's Day Statement 1978

4. Again on the initiative of the same four Irish-American political leaders, a further statement on Northern Ireland was issued on St. Patrick's Day this year, on this occasion by a Democratic party grouping of 9 Senators, 7 Congressmen and 2 Governors, condemning violence and endorsing President Carter's statement of 30 August. The statement, the text of which is in Annex III, together with a statement welcoming it issued by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, also called for a more effective leadership by the British Government to achieve a settlement that would be fair to both communities in Northern Ireland.

Congress

5. Within the United States Congress, Northern Ireland has been a greater subject of interest and of lobbying in recent years than had previously been the case. Lobbying by Provisional IRA supporters has, however, been of limited effectiveness because of the influence of "Tip" O'Neill, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. O'Neill has by general consent emerged since his election as Speaker as one of the most powerful exponents of that office. President Carter has frequently acknowledged him to be his most powerful ally in Capitol Hill and the President has been heavily dependent on him for the promotion of his Administration's policies on Capitol Hill. In the recent annual survey of U.S. news and world report of the most powerful figures in the U.S. he was voted second only to the President. The tribute to Tip O'Neill sent by President Carter to the Ireland Fund annual dinner on 10 May is an expression both of the importance of the Speaker to the President and of the significance which the Speaker has caused to be given to Northern Ireland questions within the U.S. Administration.

6. It is to a considerable extent because of the Speaker's influence on the organisation of the work of Congress that Provisional IRA lobbyists and sympathisers have not succeeded in recent years in having hearings on Northern Ireland organised. Pressure for hearings has been concentrated on the House Committee on International Relations (Chairman Clement J. Zablocki) and, specifically, two of its sub-committees, those dealing with Europe and the Middle East (Chairman Lee Hamilton) and with International Organisations (Chairman Donald Fraser). If hearings on Northern Ireland were to take place they would most likely be under the aegis of one of these two sub-committees. Congressman Fraser attempted during 1977 to hold hearings on human rights in Ireland, North and South, and was only dissuaded from doing so by the intervention of Speaker O'Neill and the Chairman of the Plenary of the Committee, Congressman Zablocki. Congressman Biaggi has recently claimed that hearings would be convened by the sub-committee on Europe and the Middle East but the latest information available is that official hearings will not now take place during the current year. The attitude of successive Irish Governments to

the question of hearings has been that while the question of holding hearings was one for the U.S. Congress to decide, the witnesses heard should be confined to those whom the Irish people North and South had designated to speak for them, namely those people democratically elected as representatives North and South or those whom they might nominate to speak on their behalf.

7. A Congressional delegation composed mostly of members of the Committee on International Relations and led by Congressman Zablocki visited Dublin in January 1978 and met the Taoiseach and some other members of the Government and were briefed on the Government's Northern Ireland policy. In the course of the visit, a member of the delegation, Congressman Dodd, had a private meeting with Mr. Ruairí Ó Brádaigh.

8. In September 1977, Congressman Biaggi, the most active Caucus supporter in Congress, approached other members of the House of Representatives about participation in a grouping which he called an Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs. He did this at the request of Mr. Jack Keane, National President of the AOH. This group has absolutely no standing: it is open to any members of Congress to form themselves into such a group at any time. By contrast with the O'Neill-Kennedy group and their affiliates which represent a significant range of Congressional leadership, the Biaggi group carry little or no clout either within the Congress or with the Administration. Nor has the Committee attracted attention in the United States outside circles already favourable to the Caucus. However, Biaggi claims that some 104 Congressmen have accepted membership of his Committee. Most of these do not support either the Provisionals or the Caucus and probably signed on thoughtlessly or unaware of the connections of either Biaggi or the Caucus. Congressman McCloskey of California recently publicly resigned from the Biaggi group, publicly attacking Biaggi for his past associations. It was rumoured some weeks ago that Congressman Brademas, a Democratic whip, had joined in return for a Biaggi promise of support to the Greek lobby but Brademas has twice denied that he is a member to press enquiries. On 12 May Representative Wyche Fowler Jr. of Georgia resigned, without publicity, from the Committee.

9. At the end of April 1978, the entire Ad Hoc Committee was notified that a meeting of the Committee would be held in Washington on 3 May to hear an address by Jack Keane, National President of the AOH. In the event only 3 Congressmen were present, Biaggi, Hanley and Zeferetti. In addition to Keane and Biaggi, Fred Burns O'Brien of the Irish National Caucus also spoke.

10. Copies of Congressman Biaggi's letter of 24 January to the Taoiseach and of the Taoiseach's reply of 17 February are attached in Annex IV. This exchange of correspondence was the subject of widespread comment in the United States. While Provisional IRA spokesmen and the Noraid journal "The Irish People" and some AOH spokesmen were rabidly hostile to the Taoiseach, the general reaction in the United States was favourable. Mr. Biaggi and his associates have subsequently been at pains to deny all association with violence and to attempt to confuse the issue of their misrepresentation of the Taoiseach's position by equating a British declaration of interest in Irish unity with a call to withdraw British troops from Northern Ireland. On 26 April letters were sent on behalf of the Taoiseach to 17 members of the Detroit chapter of the Irish National Caucus who had written to him. The text of these letters is included in Annex IV.

11. Apart from campaigning for hearings on Northern Ireland, Congressman Biaggi and others have also attempted to publicise the refusal of the U.S. authorities to grant visas to well-known members of Provisional Sinn Féin such as Ruairí Ó Brádaigh and the late Máire Drumm. While the U.S. authorities have approached us from time to time in connection with such visa applications, they have always been given the formal reply that such questions are matters for them to decide on. Particularly in the context of Congressional hearings, there is a real danger that any more substantive opinion might not remain confidential.

12. The other major Congressional development of support in the context of Northern Ireland in recent years was the visit in July 1977 of Senator George McGovern. Subsequent to his visit, Senator McGovern compiled a report which he submitted to the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate and which has been widely circulated. The report, a copy of which is attached, is balanced and comprehensive and suggests that the United States in its policy on Northern Ireland should be

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guided by the principle that the role of the United States and of concerned Americans can only be constructive if it is limited, cautious, and based on the fullest possible understanding of the nature of the struggle (Annex V).

Department of Foreign Affairs

May 1978

Northern Ireland and U.S. Gun-running

1. The British security forces in Northern Ireland are understood to have seized some 1,500 weapons in Northern Ireland of U.S. origin. British spokesmen have in the past estimated that 70-85% of the Provisional IRA arsenal is of U.S. origin but U.S. officials are believed to regard these estimates as far too high. In any event, these statistics are based on the ultimate origin of weapons, not on the more significant factor of the country or source from which the arms are obtained by Irish terrorists. The Department of Justice considers it impractical to make a reliable estimate of the amount of arms obtained by the IRA directly from the United States. Armalite semi-automatic rifles are particularly sought after by the Provisionals, in part because of their suitability for smuggling as they can easily be broken into small parts which can be transported separately. (Not all Armalites come from the U.S. - the weapon is also manufactured under licence in Japan and the Provisionals were believed at one stage to be buying these weapons in markets in Europe and the Middle East.)

2. There is concrete evidence that arms are obtained by the Provisional IRA in the U.S. and smuggled to Ireland, either directly or indirectly. The U.S. authorities at federal, state and city level have investigated many cases of gun-running and have brought prosecutions in 15 or more cases. A table of the main convictions known to the Department is attached. A number of those convicted are known to be members or officers of Noraid. It is believed that there are Noraid connections in other cases also which have not come to light.

3. There is active cooperation in relation to the international movement of arms between the Garda Síochána and various U.S. agencies, such as the FBI and the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco. This cooperation involves the tracing of the origin of illegally held arms recovered in Ireland and also covers the exchange of police information with a view to the apprehension

of illegal arms dealers and smugglers and the interception of illegal arms. Similar cooperation exists of course with British and Northern Ireland police forces.

4. The two M60 machine guns which were recently recovered in Ireland (one in the North and one in Donegal) are of U.S. origin and were among guns stolen in August 1976 from a U.S. National Guard armoury in Massachusetts. A total of seven M60s and about ninety advanced Armalites were stolen on that occasion. It is not known whether the raid was organised by the IRA, in which case they might be presumed to have control also of the other 95 weapons in the haul, or whether they obtained only some of the weapons stolen.

Note

The information connecting the M60s found with the Massachusetts raid has never been released. The matter is still the subject of police investigations, which might be prejudiced by premature disclosure.

Gun-running in the United States

Fort Worth Five (1972-)

The accused were allegedly members of Noraid. However, their refusal to answer grand jury questions prevented progress on gun-running charges. Contempt proceedings also appear to have failed and the accused were not indicted, although they were detained for some time.

Charles Malone (1973)

Was a Noraid member in San Francisco and was convicted of the illegal export of arms to Ireland.

James O'Gara (1973)

Noraid activist (New York) convicted of illegal purchase of arms. Not guilty of export of arms, although it appears to have been alleged that he was involved in the illegal shipment of arms found in Cobh (1971).

James Malin (1973)

Convicted of illegal purchase of arms in New York. Appears to have been an acknowledged member of the IRA but no obvious sign of Noraid record.

Baltimore Four (1974)

Convicted of conspiring to smuggle arms to Ireland. Prosecution alleged that crime was financed with Noraid money but this does not appear to have been proved.

Philadelphia Five

Of the two convicted, Cahalane was one time Philadelphia chairman of Noraid chapter. He and Byrne convicted of smuggling arms found in Northern Ireland. One other found not guilty, and two

others indicted with them are believed to be in Ireland. A charge of being unregistered agents of the IRA was not proven.

Patrick Purcell (1973)

Convicted of illegal dealing in arms. Apparently acting on behalf of Provisional IRA.

Agramonte (1972)

Our papers indicate that a Noraid connection was implied but do not give any evidence. Believed to be connected with Fort Worth Five.