

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



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IMMEDIATE

TO HQ FROM LONDON
FROM A/SECRETARY NELIGAN FROM AMBASSADOR

MMMRKXUV

YOU ASKED US TODAY FOR ANY POINTS WE FELT WE MIGHT USEFULLY MAKE IN CONNECTION WITH THE TAOISEACH'S FORTHCOMING TALKS WITH MRS THATCHER. I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

A. THE MOOD HERE SINCE MONDAY 27 AUGUST.

IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO EXAGGERATE THE ANTI-IRISH BITTERNESS OF THE POPULAR MOOD HERE EXPRESSED IN THE LOWER GRADE PRESS, LETTERS TO THE PAPERS AND TO US AND PHONE CALLS TO THE EMBASSY. OUR COLLEAGUES IN THE SEMI-STATE BODIES WITH LONG EXPERIENCE IN LONDON HAVE SEEN NOTHING QUITE LIKE IT FOR MANY YEARS. IT IS ESSENTIALLY A WIDESPREAD BUT DEEPLY FELT GUT REACTION AND I HARDLY THINK IT COULD HAVE BEEN ORCHESTRATED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SO QUICKLY AND SO WELL. IT IS BASICALLY DIRECTED AGAINST OUR GOVERNMENT WHICH IS ACCUSED OF BEING SOFT & ON SECURITY, UNRESPONSIVE TO THE IMPACT OF THE TRAGEDY, HARBOURING THE IRA AND TRYING TO FORCE THE NORTH INTO AN IRISH REPUBLIC. BUT THE RESENTMENT FLOWS OVER INTO A WIDE AND MINDLESS ANTI-IRISH HOSTILITY WHICH MUST BE OF EXPECIAL CONCERN TO THE IRISH LIVING IN BRITAIN.

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ON THE OTHER HAND THE REACTION OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND I MIGHT ADD OF PAPERS LIKE THE GUARDIAN AND FINANCIAL TIMES HAS BEEN MORE RESTRAINED. DESPITE THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEEPLY FELT ANGER NEITHER SHE NOR HER GOVERNMENT HAVE INDULGED IN OPEN CRITICISM. HER VISIT TO BELFAST YESTERDAY CAN BE SEEN AS HAVING A STEADYING EFFECT ON THE ARMY, ON UNIONIST REACTION AND ON PUBLIC OPINION GENERALLY. IT HAS ALSO ENABLED HER TO SIDESTEP DEMANDS TO RECALL PARLIAMENT WHICH, IF ACCEDDED TO, WOULD HAVE ESCALATED FEELING IN THE COUNTRY. SHE HAS HANDLED HERSELF WELL.

WE GET THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE PRIME MINISTER IS TAKING OVER THE DIRECTION OF NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS AT THIS JUNCTURE IN HER FIRM, NO-NONSENSE STYLE AND THAT THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE AND HUMPHREY ATKINS ARE BEING SUBMITTED TO ONE SIDE. THE FCO ON THE OTHER HAND MAY BE PLAYING A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE. THIS COULD BE A POSITIVE FACTOR SINCE THE PM AND LORD CARRINGTON MAY WELL BE ABLE TO PRODUCE A MORE STATESMANLIKE APPROACH TO THE NORTH THAN THE LESS FLEXIBLE AND LESS IMAGINATIVE NI OFFICE.

WHAT HOWEVER MRS THATCHER WILL ESPECIALLY WANT TO TALK TO THE TAOISEACH ABOUT IS SECURITY AND SHE IS LIKELY TO BE QUITE COLD AND TOUGH IN HER PRESENT MOOD AND IN THAT OF THE COUNTRY. WHAT WE HAVE TO DO ON THE OTHER HAND IS TO WIDEN THE DISCUSSION ABOUT SECURITY INTO THE ESSENTIAL FIELD OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT BY BRINGING OUT THE FUNDAMENTAL LINK BETWEEN THEM, WHILE STRESSING THAT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH AND NOT UNITY NOW IS OUR FIRST PRIORITY.

B. THE LINE WE SHOULD TAKE.

CONDOLENCES.

1. AFTER THE OPENING PRELIMINARIES. IT WOULD BE WISE, I THINK, TO REITERATE OUR NATIONS AND GOVERNMENT'S SENSE OF REVULSION AND HORROR AT THE EVENTS LAST MONDAY, MENTIONING ALL THOSE KILLED IN THE HARBOUR AT SLIGO AND AS WELL AS THE MILITARY AT WARRENPOINT. THIS PART OF WHAT WE SAY SHOULD BE DRAFTED WITH CARE AND EMPHASIS AND SHOULD UNDERLINE THE COUNTRY'S REJECTION OF VIOLENCE, EXPRESSED BY SUCCESSIVE IRISH GOVERNMENT'S AND SUPPORTED AGAIN AND AGAIN BY THE ELECTORATE.

SECURITY

2. INEVITABLY THEN THE DISCUSSION WILL MOVE INTO SECURITY AND MRS. THATCHER IS LIKELY TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE. I THINK THAT AT THIS OR AT SOME LATER APPROPRIATE STAGE WE SHOULD MAKE THE GENERAL POINT THAT WE REFUSE TO ACCEPT A DOUBLE STANDARD ON SECURITY. BOTH OUR COUNTRIES ARE GENUINE DEMOCRACIES AND IN COUNTRIES LIKE OURS IT IS TRADITIONALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTROL THE SECURITY OF EVERYONE THROUGH THE POLICE AND THE MILITARY. PEOPLE WILL NOT ACCEPT IT. WE DEEPLY RESENT THE FACT THAT IF THERE IS A SECURITY LAPSE IN BRITAIN IT IS PUT DOWN TO HUMAN ERROR BUT IF IN IRELAND IT IS REGARDED AS A FORM OF DELIBERATE NEGLIGENCE OR WORSE. WHAT ARE WE TO THINK OF THE SECURITY OF A COUNTRY WITH A HUGE POLICE FORCE AND ARMY (IN IRISH TERMS) WHICH CANNOT PREVENT A PROMINENT MP (AND A FUTURE CABINET MINISTER) FROM BEING BLOWN UP IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ITSELF? WHOSE TELEVISION ALLOWS THE MURDERER TO BE INTERVIEWED LATER, GIVING HIS MOVEMENT PRECIOUS NATIONWIDE PUBLICITY? WHICH ALLOWS THE PROVOS TO PARADE IN UNIFORM IN BELFAST IN A SPORTS ARENA ON 12 AUGUST WITH MEDIA COVERAGE? YET WHEN THE TRAGEDY OF LAST MONDAY OCCURS OFF OUR COAST (AND INDEED A VERY FEW MILES FROM NORTHERN IRELAND) THE NATION IS PILLORIED AND THE GOVERNMENT ATTACKED - EVEN THOUGH THE SECURITY OFFERED WAS SHRUGGED OFF BY LORD MOUNTBATTEN. WE WILL NOT ACCEPT A DOUBLE STANDARD.

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I DO FEEL HOWEVER WE SHOULD THINK OF SOME CONSTRUCTIVE GESTURE ON SECURITY. ARMY TO ARMY COMMUNICATION IS STILL, I PRESUME OUT, ALTHOUGH, IF IT IS RAISED, I THINK WE SHOULD SAY CLEARLY WHY IT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE AND MENTION THE OBJECTIONS TO IT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER. I TAKE IT TOO THAT ON EXTRADITION WE CANNOT MOVE, EVEN THOUGH WE REFUSE IN PRINCIPLE TO GIVE POLITICAL PRISONER STATUS TO THOSE IN PORTLAOISE AND WOULD NOT GIVE IT TO THOSE IN LONG KESH. WE HAVE TO RECOGNISE, HOWEVER, THAT OUR POSITION IS NOT AT ALL WELL UNDERSTOOD HERE APART FROM OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THAT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION HAS BECOME PART OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. WHAT WOULD BE NEEDED HERE IS A CLEARLY EXPRESSED AND CAREFULLY WORDED EXPOSE OF OUR POSITION.

I WONDER HOWEVER ON ONE SECURITY ISSUE IF WE COULDN'T MAKE A USEFUL GESTURE. WOULD IT BE IMPOSSIBLE TO LET RUC MEN HELP IN THE PREPARATION OF EVIDENCE AND INTERROGATION (IN THE PRESENCE OF GARDAI) OF SUSPECTED IRA PRISONERS? SINCE WE TAKE SUCH A STRONG LINE ON EXTRADITION COULD WE NOT ADOPT A MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO ALLOW THEM TO BE TRIED WITH ADEQUATE EVIDENCE IN OUR OWN COURTS? SUCH A GESTURE MIGHT WELL BE ACCEPTED BY PUBLIC OPINION IN IRELAND IN ITS PRESENT MOOD AND IT WOULD TAKE THE WIND OUT OF THE SAILS OF MRS THATCHER'S LIKELY SECURITY OFFENSIVE. IT NEED NOT AT THIS STAGE BE ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY.

POLITICAL PROGRESS

3. A FLEXIBLE APPROACH ON SECURITY WOULD ENABLE US TO MOVE ON TO MAKE THE FUNDAMENTAL POINT THAT VIOLENCE WILL ONLY END WHEN THE FRUSTRATION CAUSED BY POLITICAL IMMOBILISME IS REMOVED. THIS SHOULD BE OUR CENTRAL ARGUMENT AND WE SHOULD URGE THE CREATION OF AN ADMINISTRATION ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH TRADITIONS IN AN AGREED NORTHERN IRELAND AS THE ONLY WAY TO END VIOLENCE IN OUR TIME.

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4. IN URGING PROGRESS ON THOSE LINES WE SHOULD MAKE THE POINT CLEARLY THAT WE ARE NOT ARGUING NOW FOR A UNITED IRELAND OR FOR TROOP WITHDRAWALS, OR EVEN FOR THE REMOVAL OF NEGATIVE GUARANTEES TO THE UNIONISTS. WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR IN POLITICAL PROGRESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO HOPE THAT FROM PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE NORTH CLOSER RELATIONS WITHIN THE ISLAND AS A WHOLE WILL INEVITABLY RESULT. WE SHOULD CATEGORICALLY DENY THE MISLEADING PRESS REPORTS OF RECENT DAYS INCLUDING THE OFFENSIVE O'BRIEN ARTICLE IN WEBORELO CI

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END

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(DRAFTED 30.8.79) 31.8.79

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RECD ALRIGHT???YES THKS
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