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AMBASÁID NA HÉIREANN

(202) 462-3939



EMBASSY OF IRELAND

2234 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., N. W.

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20008

Confidential

27 March 1980

Mr David Neligan  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Assistant Secretary

I thought it might be useful to have a record of the background moves involved in this year's St. Patrick's Day statement. Hence the enclosed report a copy of which has been sent directly to the Ambassador at London. For obvious reasons, it is suggested that unnecessary circulation of the report should be avoided.

Yours sincerely

Ambassador

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WASHINGTON DC 20008

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27 March 1980

The Secretary  
Department of Foreign Affairs

JOINT ST. PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT 1980

1. You are already aware of the main developments leading up to the release of the 1980 joint St. Patrick's Day statement, the text of which is attached herewith. The following background details may also be of interest.
2. The principle of having a 1980 statement was not seriously questioned by any of the main parties involved though some of O'Neill's advisers felt that it might be better at this stage to skip a year not only because of complications arising out of US domestic politics in a presidential election year but also because the Atkins Conference was in session in Belfast and a new administration in Dublin had not yet publicly addressed itself to problems including its attitude to NORAIID, The Irish National Caucus and Congressman Biaggi's Ad Hoc Committee. These views did not have very much support elsewhere nor indeed were they shared by O'Neill himself. An initial practical problem was that Kennedy's adviser who normally drafted the statement and chaired the meetings to see it through





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its various stages was fully engaged on the road in the Senator's campaign and there was no obvious replacement for him. Eventually O'Neill's office took the initiative in calling a first meeting early in March though the first draft of a statement emerged from the hand of a relatively uninformed official in Kennedy's office.

2. There were some problems in arranging meetings and indeed in maintaining communications between the Big Four or their advisers. There are tensions between Kennedy on the one hand and Carey and Moynihan on the other hand. The latter two played a central role in August 1979 in persuading Kennedy to challenge for the Presidential nomination but they have not found it possible in recent months to support Kennedy in any way and apparently they are not, at the moment, even returning telephone calls from Kennedy. Carey remains, in theory, neutral as between Carter and Kennedy though he has made TV commercials supporting Carter's financial assistance to New York. Moynihan has not publicly endorsed Carter but has given his campaign some support. In addition, the relationship between Carey and O'Neill has never been an easy one since their days together in the House of Representatives and personal contact between them is minimal. O'Neill, as Chairman of this year's Democratic Convention, is being very careful to remove himself from





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any internal Democratic Party wrangles and he does not wish, whatever the topic is, to become involved in mediating any dispute between prominent Democrats. It was against that background that daily negotiations on the joint statement began on 4 March.

4. The first draft was a 5-page document devoted mainly to an analysis of the main developments within Northern Ireland since the 1979 statement. It included a call for President Carter to join "in reaffirming the U.S. commitment to peace in Northern Ireland". It also threw cold water on the Atkins Conference, referred to "disturbing evidence of more violations of human rights in Northern Ireland" and also to "systematic abuse and maltreatment of prisoners in Ireland", a reference intended to include prisons in the Republic as well as those in Northern Ireland. It concluded with the rather confusing statement "we believe a united Ireland in which power is shared and the rights of the Protestant and Catholic communities are protected is fundamental to peace". It did not take long to have that draft rejected even as a basis for discussion but it took a few more days to find agreement on whose draft would next be considered. O'Neill wanted a short snappy document. Carey seemed prepared to go along with a lengthy article rather than a short statement and Kennedy was interested in a statement that would cover "all the bases". As





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has been normal in recent years, Moynihan made little direct contribution to the development of the statement but his adviser played a vital rôle in bringing together the conflicting elements.

5. In the week beginning 10 March, a number of drafts were still being discussed and there was much shadow boxing, especially involving Kennedy and Carey. Some of the drafts contained strong but not particularly constructive anti-British sentiment and focussed more on criticising Britain for what it had not done in recent years than on calling for anything very specific. At that stage, at the request of O'Neill, we became involved in the drafting and all sides seemed relieved to have a text which could not be described as originating in a rival's office. None of the Four had any difficulty in accepting that the British Government should be urged "to express its interest in the unity of Ireland and to join with the Government of Ireland in working to achieve peace and reconciliation". Kennedy's office indeed was prepared to go a little further and to tie itself specifically to the Taoiseach's Ard Fheis speech. One of their later drafts included a full quotation from that speech together with a sentence asking the U.S. administration "to join with Prime Minister Haughey in strongly encouraging forward movement along the lines of his Annual Convention speech". O'Neill's advisers felt,





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however, that the step forward in supporting the Irish Government's call to the British Government to work towards Irish unity was in itself a big enough step without being seen to tie it to any particular Irish personality. In the past, they had resisted efforts to link themselves publicly with John Hume who had, on one occasion, sought to have a public endorsement of his policy in a St. Patrick's Day statement.

6. There were difficulties in finding a suitable reference to human rights. Carey, in particular, wanted a lengthy recital of human rights violations by Britain in Northern Ireland in the last year but O'Neill, who is sensitive to British criticism of his rôle in suspending licences for arms sales to the RUC, wished to ensure that nothing in the statement would provide a target for wild criticism by the Daily Telegraph and right-wing Tories. He wanted the human rights criticism tied to an Amnesty or other international report but, as you are aware, no such reports have issued in the last year. To avoid criticism from The Irish National Caucus and Congressman Biaggi, some human rights reference was felt necessary and the issue had not been resolved when, by good fortune, an Irish Times arrived on 13 March with a brief report on the recently issued annual report of Lord Plant's Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. The accuracy of the





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Irish Times report was checked directly with an SDLP member of the Commission and on that basis the reference expressing "concern over the British Government's continued rejection of recommendations made by its own Standing Advisory Commission" was included.

7. A minor problem developed in relation to the timing of the release of the statement. Traditionally the statement has been released for publication on St. Patrick's Day itself but this has sometimes meant, especially if the 17th March falls on a weekend, that it received almost no coverage either in the American or the Irish media. With the weekend intervening this year, we suggested that the statement might be released on 14 March for publication on 17 March but once the idea of releasing the statement before St. Patrick's Day became accepted, Kennedy's office pressed to have it released for publication before the weekend so that whatever impact it might have within the Irish-American community would have time to take effect before the Illinois primary on 18 March. It was eventually agreed to issue the statement for immediate publication on 14 March though that was certainly one of the factors in losing the support of two important political figures here who had signed the statement in March 1979.





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8. Neither Senator George McGovern nor Congressman Tom Foley found it possible to sign this year's statement. While McGovern's absence is unfortunate, it can be said that to some extent his most successful political years are behind him. Congressman Foley, on the other hand, is one of the most powerful figures in Democratic Party circles, chairing the group of Democrats elected to the House of Representatives and also the House Committee on Agriculture. He is generally regarded as part of the Democratic Party leadership in Washington and as such is included, for example, in many of the confidential briefings given by the President and members of the Administration. He is talked about as a politician with an even brighter future though he has in recent years had difficult re-election battles in his district in Washington State where his liberal views have not endeared him to a generally conservative electorate. His interest in Ireland derives from his Irish roots some generations back and he has no significant Irish constituency in the district. He has for many years been a close friend and supporter of Speaker O'Neill's who included him in his 1979 Irish visit.

9. Both Foley and McGovern had a number of problems with the statement. Firstly, they felt that its anti-British tone was dictated more by American domestic political factors than by





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factors in the Anglo-Irish relationship. Secondly, they felt that the last year had shown some signs of serious efforts on the part of the British Government in relation to Northern Ireland both in overall political matters and also in the human rights area. It would be ungenerous to ignore those developments. Thirdly, they felt that no extra names should be added to the statement in a US election year and, in particular, they did not want the name of Mayor Jane Byrne of Chicago to be associated with the statement. They were not impressed with the argument that during the last year Mayor Byrne has visited Ireland and had also hosted the former Taoiseach on his visit to Chicago in November 1979. It is worth noting that O'Neill was also opposed to adding Mayor Byrne's name but he did not make a major issue of it once it became clear that Kennedy was going to put her name to the statement whatever anyone else thought. It will probably be possible to persuade Foley and McGovern to come back on board for future joint efforts though they will need to be cultivated carefully. The Minister's meeting during his visit here with Foley has undoubtedly helped and Foley has since indicated that his difficulty with the statement lay "almost exclusively" with the US domestic political aspects rather than with any disagreement on the call for the British Government to express its interest in the unity of Ireland.





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10. When the statement was issued on 14 March there was some confusion as to who exactly signed it. Different lists were given out by Speaker O'Neill's office and by Senator Kennedy's office but it is now clear that the signatories, in addition to the Big Four, were Senators Eagleton, Hart, Biden, Governor Byrne of New Jersey, Representative Boland, Cavanaugh, Edwards, Markey, Shannon, Thompson and Mayor Byrne of Chicago. In the course of a lunch with Mayor Byrne in Chicago on 14 March, she made it clear that she had neither seen the statement nor contributed in any way to its drafting. She had, however, been asked by Senator Kennedy "to give her name for a proclamation" and had agreed that her name could be used. When I gave her the gist of the statement and referred her in particular to the call for the British to declare their interest in Irish unity, she said she thought the British had already done that! It is clear - as indeed it was during the former Taoiseach's visit to Chicago last November - that Mayor Byrne's knowledge of current Irish realities is minimal. Of the other signatories, the most significant is Senator Biden. He continues to hold the key post of Chairman of the European Affairs Sub-Committee of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Biden was elected in the Democratic Party interest as Senator for Delaware in 1972 when he was just 29 and is sometimes talked of as a possible Presidential candidate. The number and nature of the posts which he currently holds on the Hill is an indication





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of the respect with which he is held by his colleagues and we are aware that British representatives here put some pressure on Biden not to continue his association with the Irish-American politicians on matters as sensitive as Anglo-Irish relations.

11. Contrary to suggestions appearing in Irish newspapers, at no stage were any of those involved in drafting the statement in contact with John Hume. He telephoned me from Strasbourg on 12 March to find out if there would be a statement and I gave him the information then available. He indicated that he was happy with the content.

Ambassador