

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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Minister,

Visit by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Clark

1. There have been three conversations on Irish affairs with Clark in recent months. I spoke to him on 11 August, you had lunch with him on 5 October and Ambassador O'Sullivan spoke to him shortly after his arrival. Reports of all three conversations are attached. The primary purpose of this visit - which is, I think, his first foreign mission - is to enable him to form a first hand up-to-date impression of the Northern Ireland situation and report directly to President Reagan. Clark wishes the U.S. to take an active interest in Irish affairs and he is inclined to the view that that interest should be expressed in favour of the Irish nationalist position. Though he is personally very close to the President, it is important to bear in mind that Clark has not been able to influence the President on two recent occasions when we might have hoped for a more sympathetic US position. In July, the President did not help substantially in relation to the H-Block situation and in November he was not apparently prepared to deliver a speech which included references helpful to our position. Other than that reaching him from Clark, all the advice reaching the President warns him to keep away from the Irish problem. For foreign policy reasons the State Department is advising the President to take a "neutral" (that is pro-British), non-interventionist position. The National Security Council, through its Director, Richard Allen, is also giving the President a very pro-British line and there are reasons for believing that Allen is personally very anti-Irish. But perhaps most significantly, the President's top adviser, Ed. Meese, is

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totally opposed to the U.S. getting involved in any way in the Irish problem. Meese believes that it is a no-win situation for a U.S. President and in any event he is firmly of the view that the President has enough on his plate without taking on one more issue. Meese is by far the most powerful of the Reagan advisers and indeed is frequently referred to as the real President of the United States.

2. If anyone within the Administration can help us overcome these obstacles and persuade the President to take an active pro-nationalist Irish interest, it is Clark. He has been associated with Reagan since the latter entered politics and he served as Reagan's Cabinet Secretary during his first term as Governor of California. From 1969 until his appointment as U.S. Deputy Secretary of State earlier this year, he was a Judge on one or other of the California Courts. Clark is credited with persuading Reagan to adopt a number of pro-Catholic positions particularly on abortion and education. During the Presidential election campaign, he was probably the main, behind the scenes channel of contact between Reagan and the U.S. Catholic community. This brought him, inevitably, into some contact with the Irish issue but his own personal interest in Irish affairs goes back to the mid-50s' when he was stationed with the U.S. Army in Europe and made a trip (possibly for his honeymoon) to Ireland. He is a fifth generation Californian Irishman.
  
3. U.S. policy on Northern Ireland has developed in a generally satisfactory way from our point of view over the last five years. This development has been due mainly to the efforts of prominent Democrats in Congress who were particularly successful in persuading President Carter publicly to adopt a helpful position. Two of the significant Irish related developments of the Carter Administration were the statement of August 30, 1977 which



contained a qualified promise of job creating investment for Northern Ireland and the joint press statement issued following the meeting between President Carter and Prime Minister Thatcher on December 17 1979 which for the first time formally recognised that Northern Ireland was a matter for discussion between Washington and London.

4. When the Reagan Administration was established earlier this year there were obvious dangers that the U.S. interest in the Northern Ireland situation would diminish. Indeed, it is still by no means certain that we can hope to retain completely the position established during the Carter Administration. The President is personally well disposed to Ireland though as is clear from the report of my extended conversation with him on 14 July 1981 his knowledge of Irish affairs not considerable. His interest is, however, sufficient to have succeeded in securing from him a formal statement on March 17 1981 in which he offered "the good offices of the United States to those Irish - and indeed to all world citizens - who wish fervently for peace and victory over those who sow fear and terror". The statement was to a large extent the President's own doing. The advice given to him both by the State Department and the National Security Council at the time was not to issue a statement at all. There were two separate Reagan gestures on St. Patrick's Day. He visited the Embassy and made a very warm but largely non-political speech. The formal statement was the culmination of a major lobbying exercise which had been going on for some weeks and which used to the full the O'Neill/Kennedy lobby in Congress. At the time - early days in his Administration - the President was very anxious to establish a good working relationship with Speaker O'Neill and there is no doubt that that desire was the major factor in securing the statement. A secondary factor,

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however, was the Administration's desire to respond to our request for help in combating U.S. support for violence in Northern Ireland. Reagan personally and his Administration generally have been taking a particularly stront anti-terrorist approach and it has been found particularly helpful to bear this approach in mind and emphasise the terrcrist element of the NI problem when talking to senior Reagan officials.

5. It would appear, therefore, that the two factors most likely to be helpful to us as we seek to continue the U.S. Administration's interest in Ireland are firstly the personality of Ronald Reagan and secondly his Administration's strong stand against terrorism all over the world. In talking to Clark it might, therefore, be useful to stress how important it is for us to have the support of the American Administration as we seek to minimise the damage done in Ireland by fund raising, gun-running and propaganda for the I.R.A. in the United States. It might be particularly helpful to stress to Clark that the problem is a serious one for us and that the scale of the U.S. connection with violence in Ireland is such as to threaten not simply Northern Ireland but also the stability of the Republic. It might also be pointed out that as a very small country it is difficult for us to deal with the scale of the problem which we confront in the United States and that we have, therefore, found it both necessary and useful to enlist the support of Irish-American politicians to carry out the very urgent and necessary task which faces us in the United States. Given the President's known Irish links and given his public acknowledgement of his Irish heritage, we would, therefore, hope that it would be possible for him to be helpful to us. A draft paragraph which we had hoped he might deliver in his speech to the American-Irish Historical Society last month is attached and it might be possible to suggest that an opportunity should be found to deliver a speech containing such a paragraph at some stage in the near future.



5.

6. Otherwise, the Clark visit might be availed of to

- brief him on the current state of Anglo-Irish relations following the meeting between the Taoiseach and Mrs. Thatcher. (Clark will have just had a meeting in London with Atkins and Prior);
- give him an assessment of the NI situation as seen from Dublin;
- explain the Government's approach to the problem with special reference to the Taoiseach's constitutional crusade;
- advance the idea of an official visit to the U.S. by the Taoiseach next Spring and
- invite President Reagan to visit Ireland during his term of office

7. Attached to this minute are the following documents:

- (a) the Carter statement, August 1977;
- (b) the joint Carter/Thatcher press release, December 1979;
- (c) Reagan statement, 17 March 1981;
- (d) report of conversation with Reagan, 14 July 1981;
- (e) report of three conversations with Clark, August-November 1981;
- (f) the speech that wasn't: draft paragraph and Embassy Report.

SD

Seán Donlon

Secretary

3 December 1981