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Mr. Fogarty
To see Mr. P. A. D.

Mr. Sullivan
Mr. O'Brien

AA 3110

DO 4/10

1. Mr. Anderson
2. Mr. Donoghue

for info
P.D.

2/18

Confidential

Ms. Smith 16 pa. ~~IRA~~ Libya.

Meeting between Minister for Foreign Affairs and the
Permanent Representative of Libya to the UN -
New York 27 September 1991

Summary

In the course of his visit to the UN in New York last week, the Minister for Foreign Affairs had a meeting with the Permanent Representative of Libya, who is a former Foreign Minister and is reputed to be a person of considerable influence in Libya.

The Minister pressed strongly on two issues:- (i) the opening of the Libyan market to Irish cattle and beef; and (ii) our concern that there should be no support from Libya for the IRA. He spoke vigorously on both points but the discussion throughout was friendly.

The Permanent Representative promised to report the discussion at once to his authorities and to raise it again when he returns to Libya in mid-October. It was noted that Ambassador Fogarty intends to go again to Libya shortly to press the matter further.

The Permanent Representative recommended that he seek a meeting with the Minister for Agriculture in Libya (who, he said, is a friend of his).

Details

The Minister began by recalling that he had met the Libyan Foreign Minister at a meeting between the EC and the Maghreb Group. We now have a problem with Libya because of the ban on our beef and cattle sales because of a disease (BSE) which is not in fact a problem in Ireland.

Our Minister for Agriculture went to Libya last year and there had been good technical discussions since then at veterinary level in the course of which we had been able to show that there is no problem. Irish cattle in fact have a very high status in health matters and Irish beef circulates freely in the EC. Furthermore the relevant international veterinary organisation based in Paris accepts that we have no problem of this kind in Ireland. Indeed we have had only 43 animals in all infected from a herd of seven million and we operate very tight controls.

Recently our Ambassador to Libya (based in Rome) together with the Agricultural attache of the Embassy discussed the matter with the Libyan veterinary authorities and asked why they were not lifting the ban. The Ambassador was told that political direction would be needed to do so.

The Libyan Permanent Representative said that there was no political reason for the ban - it was simply that his authorities were very sensitive about disease. They had had serious problems with Sudan and Mexico and had found it necessary to be very strict. However he would send a cable to his authorities at once to report what the Minister had said. Furthermore he himself would be returning to Tripoli on 15 October and he would be seeing the Minister for Agriculture who was a good friend of his. He would report to him on what had been said. He then asked about the current attitude of the European Community countries to Libya.

The Minister said that for our part we had been well disposed to Libya when they needed friends within the Community.

The Permanent Representative mentioned a recent meeting with some member States of the Community (Spain, Portugal, France and Italy) and a summit at the end of October to be held in Tunisia.

He said he had been in London himself and that he could see no reason not to have good relations between Britain and Libya. In fact Libya is Britain's second largest trade partner in the Middle East (sic) and Libya does more trade with it than with Italy or with Germany. The Libyan authorities have set up a purchasing company in London which purchases flbn worth annually; there are eight thousand British people working in Libya; and there are two thousand Libyan students in the UK. In economic and cultural matters Libya and Britain have the best of relations but on the political side relations are very bad.

The Minister said that the reason for this was Libyan support for IRA terrorism in the past.

The Permanent Representative said that that had stopped two years ago.

The Minister referred to the shipment of arms aboard the Eksund in 1987. If the guns in question had got through there would have been civil war in Ireland. Libya was doing damage to a friendly country.

The Permanent Representative said that this had simply been a reaction to Mrs Thatcher's attitude to Libya. He repeated that it had now ceased.

The Minister asked if they wished to retaliate why did they not simply shift their trade to countries (like Ireland) which were friendly in principle? He and the Taoiseach had visited Libya.

The Permanent Representative asked could Ireland supply equipment for the oil industry?

The Minister said that we could not supply this kind of heavy engineering equipment but we had a good deal to sell including in particular beef and cattle.

The Permanent Representative suggested that our Ambassador in London might make contact with the Libyan purchasing company there on general trade possibilities. He said that Libya also has a joint company in Dublin (sic). He also suggested that we might invite the Libyan Minister for Agriculture who is a friend of his to Ireland. The Minister had been responsible for the Great Man-Made River Project which was opened at the end of August.

Much of the work on the project had been done by an American company, Brown and Druth, which is operating from London.

The Minister said that we have been good friends of Libya. The Taoiseach and he visited that country and were received by Colonel Ghadaffi. They had explained that Ireland wants good relations with Libya but that Libya must stop supplying weapons for the IRA. Ghadaffi had agreed at the time but had changed his mind because of the American bombing attack on Libya. Already before any attack however in 1985 and 1986 guns had been supplied to the IRA.

The Permanent Representative said he could assure the Minister that Libya has now completely stopped this. He thought the Irish Government could play a role in helping to improve relations between Libya and the UK.

The Minister said that we had been making progress in this direction but recently Ghadaffi had said publicly that they were still supplying terrorists.

The Permanent Representative referred to the visit by Mr. Teddy Taylor M.P. to Libya which had been an effort to improve the relationship. He said that Taylor had been actually sent by the British Government and was negotiating with the Libyan authorities in Tripoli. Some influences in the Foreign Office (Baker ?) disapproved and the effort had come to nothing. However Taylor was going to publish what had happened.

The Minister said that Libya was hurting its friends by its support for the IRA.

The Permanent Representative said a statement of his disclaiming support for the IRA had been published in the Daily Telegraph. Following this he had received a lot of letters from Irish-Americans condemning his stand!

The Minister said that if Libya wishes to show sympathy for the Irish people it should do it by way of support for the Irish Government.

The Permanent Representative said that in general the British are the most hated country in the Middle East. France too is often disliked but for the masses the British are really seen as the enemy in a way that does not apply to France or to other countries like the USA or Germany. This is because they gave Palestine to the Israelis.

The Minister asked about attitudes to Italy which had been a colonial power in Libya in relatively recent times?

The Permanent Representative said that this was true but that now Libya had developed a new relationship with Italy. The British however continued their unfriendly activities. The US for example went into the Gulf War to help to free Kuwait. Iraq had done wrong in invading Kuwait and to that extent the American intervention was understandable. Britain however had gone into that war to seek revenge because it hated the Arab nation. Everywhere Britain had been there was trouble - Palestine, Cyprus, Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Africa, Kashmir and so on.

The Minister asked if Libya would take our beef?

The Permanent Representative (jocularly) said it was necessary to be aggressive in business matters in pushing one's products.

The Minister said that the Ambassador should say to his political authorities that we regard it as a political decision.

The Permanent Representative said that Argentina was a very strong competitor.

The Minister said that our products were better and benefitted from EC subsidies.

The Permanent Representative said he could promise they would do something.

The undersigned mentioned that our Ambassador who had already been in Libya a month ago would be visiting Libya shortly again to follow-up further on the matter. Did the Permanent Representative think that another visit of this kind would be helpful at present?

The Permanent Representative said that an early visit would be desirable. He suggested that the Ambassador ask to see the Minister for Agriculture who was a friend of his. For his own part he would report home at once on the discussion with the Minister.



N. Dorr
Secretary
1 October, 1991

C.C. PSM
A/Secs Murphy, Barrington, O hūginn
Ambassadors, Rome, London
Permanent Representative, New York
Secretary to the Government
Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Food