



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2021/45/56
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Official Visit to Libya 6-10 Oct. 1991  
Excerpt from Ambassador Fogarty's Report.

Meeting with Mr. Musa Koussa, Foreign Ministry

According to diplomatic colleagues in Tripoli, Mr. Musa Koussa is a shadowy but extremely important figure in the Libyan political hierarchy. He is believed to be very close to Ghaddafi. He is variously described as Deputy Minister or Under Secretary at the Foreign Ministry, but I have been informed by diplomatic colleagues, and meeting him seemed to bear this out, that he has important roles other than the Foreign Ministry proper. (My confidential letter of 19 November to the Secretary refers).

I informed Mr. Musa Koussa at the outset that I had not paid an official visit as such to Libya for four years. This was because of certain political difficulties in our relations with Libya of which he would be aware and which my Government very much hoped were now behind us. I hoped now to visit Libya on a more regular basis. We wished to have good relations with Libya and to develop these relations. We considered that there was, in particular, considerable scope and potential for the development of our bilateral relations in the areas of economic cooperation and trade. I outlined the discussions that were taking place relating to possible Irish participation in agricultural development projects in Libya and the drawing up of a framework agreement between the two sides to provide for this.

I then went on to deal with the very serious problem that had arisen in trading relations between the two countries as a consequence of the ban imposed by Libya on imports of Irish cattle and beef because of the BSE disease. I presented the Irish case fully and in the strongest terms as I had done at my other meetings in Tripoli. Our cattle and beef trade with Libya was of considerable importance for Ireland's agricultural economy. In the interests of the full restoration of Irish-Libya trading relations and the development of economic cooperation between the two countries it was essential that this ban be lifted.

Having said that he was very pleased to see me, Musa Kousa stressed that Libya very much wished to maintain good relations with Ireland. Ireland was a small state which Libya respected very much, especially since it had no adverse historical background and no bad record insofar as the Arab world was concerned. This was an important factor in developing our relations. Our Prime Minister had good personal relations with Libya and had met the leader. These were all encouraging factors for the development of our relations. He saw no obstacles in this regard.

The European Community had placed some restrictions on cooperation with Libya. This was serious. Ireland was a member of the EC, but he did not blame Ireland for the imposition of those restrictions. He appreciated Ireland's position.

The position taken by many European countries, particularly the UK, had negative effects on Libya. These countries accused Libya of being a terrorist state. But Libya was the victim of terrorism and expected to be a victim in the future. They were always the scapegoat. There is no longer Western talk in regard to terrorism of Iran or Syria; they now have their own role. This was a political calculation on the part of the West. Libya had no strong political card to play. So now all problems are attributed to Libya. Syria is now important to the US because of the proposed Middle East Peace Conference. There is no longer talk of Syria where terrorism is concerned. But there is continued talk of Libya. For example, a plane crashed in Scotland and Syria was first mentioned as being responsible. But now Libya was being blamed. The West must have a victim, must have a country to accuse.

On the question of connections between Libya and the IRA all one had to do was to compare the assistance that the IRA got from the United States. This was, of course, "non-institutional" assistance. But still the talk was of Libyan help. He did not deny

Libya's previous help to the IRA, but this had been stopped. There had been no help given in ten years. The course which the IRA was following was not the correct one.

No one believed Libya. How could the world be convinced? Libya could always be blamed and this would be believed.

Libya made no secret of its support for liberation movements, in South Africa and the PLO, for example.

But taking down a plane carrying civilians as happened at Lockerbie, what gain would this be for Libya? Was it because the Libyans do this for a hobby? Only a lunatic would do such a thing. It was the fate of Libya to be blamed because of US pressure and Zionism. As a result of lobbying from these quarters, other were being misled.

Regarding the downing of the Italian civilian plane in the Mediterranean (the so-called Ustica affair in the mid-1980s, still under investigation by the Italian authorities), this happened because Libya was, in fact, the target. Col Ghaddafi had been on his way to France but, because of a mechanical problem, his aircraft had to land in Malta. The Italian plane had been shot down by mistake. But there was no talk of the US shooting down this plane. There was no talk when the US bombed Tripoli and killed civilians.

The United States was an imperial power with strength and might. The US had no deep roots of civilisation. Europe had, Britain had. The US air attack on Tripoli was in retaliation for the bombing of a nightclub (in Berlin). Libya was not responsible for this.

This ended Musa Kousa's pretty lengthy political monologue.

I returned to the question of Libyan connections with the IRA. Support for the IRA, moral or material, from any country was totally unacceptable to the Irish Government and people. As I had said earlier, my Government very much hoped and expected that the difficulties in our relations with Libya, which had been caused by Libya's connections with the IRA, were now behind us. Ireland was a member of the EC. Our Foreign Minister endeavoured to be as helpful as possible within the Community insofar as Libya was concerned. But much depended on Libya itself in its actions, certain support given, and statements.

Musa Kousa said that he attached great importance to people like myself to "expose" Libya's case. Libya had tried on several occasions to improve the situation vis-à-vis Europe. They had asked the UK : what can we do? Mr. Taylor (i.e. Teddy Taylor MP) had sat in the chair I was sitting on and had replied, when asked what was expected of Libya by the UK : Libya must compensate the family of the policewoman who was killed; and the Libyan Government must give an assurance that it had had nothing to do with the killing. Taylor had wanted to meet Col Ghaddafi and this was arranged. When he reported back, the British Government was not convinced. Libya's relations with the US had to be improved. The two countries could not remain withdrawn from each other forever. The UK is still a substantial exporter to Libya - at present US \$ 1 billion worth. Up to now Libya had kept separate economic and political relations. Not any more; they were convinced that economics could not be divorced from politics.

Musa Kousa then recalled that a meeting of the Irish-Libyan Joint Economic Commission had been arranged in the past but had not taken place.

I said that a meeting of the Joint Commission had been arranged to take place in Tripoli in late 1987. However, due to negative developments affecting relations between Ireland and

Libya, it had not taken place. We should perhaps now examine how the Joint Commission might be revived. But the Libyan ban on our cattle and beef was an existing and serious problem for us.

Mr. Musa Kousa said that Ireland was Libya's preferred source for cattle and meat. In this we had a long-standing relationship. Any "minor procedures" could be solved (in the context of a meeting of the Joint Economic Commission). We should work towards reviving the Joint Commission. It was important that cooperation should take place in sectors other than cattle/meat. There was possible Irish participation in the second phase of the Great Man-Made River Project - the "rehabilitation" of the land.

I confirmed that we were very interested in participation in projects for agricultural development. I agreed that cattle/meat was only one aspect of the development of economic cooperation, but the ban was a very urgent problem for us now. Irish agriculture had been badly hit because of the ban.

Musa Kousa raised the question of the possible appointment of the Head of the Libyan People's Bureau in Rome as Ambassador to Ireland. This would facilitate communications. I responded that I would immediately take the matter up with my authorities in Dublin.

Musa Kousa said, in conclusion, that Libya was in principle interested in developing relations between the two countries. "We are ready to go to the limit of what you are focussing on".

I repeated that I would immediately take up with my authorities both his suggestions for the holding of a meeting of the Joint Commission and the accreditation of the Head of the Libyan People's Bureau in Rome as Ambassador to Ireland. At the same time I urged upon him once again that steps be taken to lift the ban on the import of Irish cattle and beef.

He said I would always be welcome to Libya.