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Meeting between Speaker Foley's delegation
and the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

2 September 1991

U.S. side: present were Speaker Thomas Foley, Rep. David Obey, Rep. J. Moakley, Rep. Matt McHugh, Rep. Frank McCloskey, Rep. R. Boucher, Rep. R. Neal, Rep. Tom Manton, Rep. B. Clinger, Rep. B. Green. Also present were Werner Brandt, Mike O'Neil and Jeff Biggs from the Speaker's Office, Kevin Peterson from the Friends of Ireland, and Mr. T. Tomkin and Mr. S. Rubino from the US Embassy.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs was accompanied by Secretary Dorr, Ambassador designate Gallagher, A/Sec O hUiginn, Mr. B. Scannell and Mr. D. Kelleher.

The Minister said that the Government was appreciative that the Speaker had made time to visit Ireland with his colleagues. The Irish Government greatly valued the U.S.'s friendship and support. The U.S.'s standing was such with both Britain and Ireland that it commanded the respect and influence of both Governments and also of both the communities in Northern Ireland.

The Minister congratulated Speaker Foley on his RTE radio interview the previous day. The Minister added that he was particularly pleased that the Speaker had specifically condemned NORAID - throughout his own political career he always vehemently opposed NORAID. The Minister thanked the Speaker and his colleagues for their help on several issues over the last few years, in particular their support in influencing substantial fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland. Without this support the new Fair Employment Act would not have emerged. He referred also to their help on the release of the Birmingham Six

and the Guildford Four and on the passage of immigration legislation in Congress. On the International Fund for Ireland, the Minister said that he knew how difficult it was to find funding for the IFI even at the best of times. The continued support by Congress for IFI funding sent a strong political message that the US stood by the Anglo-Irish process. The Minister referred also to reform of the UDR.

The Minister briefed the delegation on the talks and their prospects for resumption. It was important, he felt, to bring the Unionists into the political framework as they had opted out after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in November 1985. The Irish Government had always been most flexible in their approach to the talks and had kept quiet on a number of occasions when it might have been politically expedient to answer unfounded criticisms levelled against the Government's approach. The Minister said that 95% of people would have been of the opinion that the talks were a worthwhile process. The rank and file Unionists were not happy with the current situation. The Government had expected that the second line rank of Unionists e.g. Robinson and Maginnis, would have been more forthcoming during the talks. However, this had not materialised. The "stranglehold from the top" had been maintained by the Unionist leaders.

The Taoiseach had shown the Government's flexibility in his Dail statement on the day the talks were suspended. The next Anglo-Irish Conference was scheduled for 13 September and both Governments would take further stock on how to continue with the political process. The fact that the British election would have to take place before June of next year could be a factor. The Taoiseach and Prime Minister Major had agreed on a summit which would take place in either October/November. The Taoiseach and Prime Minister Major had a good relationship and naturally the

question of Northern Ireland would figure largely on their agenda.

The Speaker introduced his delegation to the Minister. He jokingly referred to Congressman Obey as a "lord proprietor" for the Fund. In addition, he added, that Congressman McHugh and Bill Green had been "extraordinarily helpful" in securing funding for the IFI. Members of the Friends of Ireland had strongly supported the A-I Agreement and felt that it should be implemented fully by Britain. Speaker Foley added that he was glad to hear of our close relationship with Britain on so many fronts. He was happy at the lack of recrimination at the conclusion of the talks. The US looked towards the UK and Ireland as a team of friends as Europe approached 1992. The Speaker, in relation to his RTE interview, said he had been pressed to speculate how the situation in the USSR would develop. This was virtually impossible to do as the pace of change throughout the world was dramatic. He said that it had taken ten months for the situation in Poland to climax, ten weeks in Czechoslovakia, ten days for East Germany and even less in the Soviet Union. As regards international aid for the USSR, it was necessary that humanitarian assistance be given almost immediately before an economic package could be considered. The relevant Congressional committees would be asked to consider aid to the Soviet Union.

Speaker Foley invited members of his delegation to ask a few questions. Congressman McCloskey as Chairman of Friends of Ireland asked the Minister to speculate how might it be possible to bring both sides together in Northern Ireland. The Minister said that at the forthcoming summit between the Taoiseach and Prime Minister both Governments would have to sketch out the future, and in addition that the Unionists would have to learn to play ball. Mrs. Thatcher had put down the Unionist veto for the

first time. Both Governments would be thinking long term and not piecemeal and should work together towards an overall objective. Secretary of State Brooke's speech of January 1990 in which he had spelt out that Britain had no strategic interest in Northern Ireland was very helpful. Other encouraging developments were meetings between the British and Irish parliamentarians. The Minister added that if we could make redundant this cycle of violence it would be much easier to achieve political progress. The Minister, in reply to a question from Rep Bill Green, sketched out the progress that had been achieved towards Europe 1992 and also on the future enlargement of the community. Congressman Neal mentioned that if Articles Two and Three of the Irish Constitution were removed it would cause a political fallout in his constituency. The Minister said that our approach to the talks had been that everything was on the table but naturally we were not prepared to show our cards as this would have been foolish. Any changes to the Constitution would have to be approved by a national referendum.

Brendan Scannell

3 September 1991

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