

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



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TO HQ FROM WASHINGTON
FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE WASHINGTON STAR ON TUESDAY, JULY 8, 1980:

ENVOY'S FIRING STIRS UP NEW IRISH TROUBLE

SEAN DONLON, THE AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND, MADE MANY FRIENDS IN THE 20 MONTHS HE HAS SERVED HERE. BUT HE MADE ONE IMPORTANT ENEMY, AN ITALIAN-AMERICAN CONGRESSMAN FROM THE BRONX, ONE MARIO BIAGGI.

THE RESULT IS THAT DONLON IS, ACCORDING TO UNCONFIRMED REPORTS FROM DUBLIN, BEING REPLACED IN WHAT PROMISES TO BE THE MOST UNPOPULAR MOVE SINCE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER JAMES CALLAGHAN DISLODGED SIR PETER RAMSBOTHAM IN FAVOUR OF HIS SON-IN-LAW, PETER JAY.

DONLON, WHO IS 36, AND PERSONABLE, WADED INTO THE THICK OF IRISH-AMERICAN POLITICS WITH A VIGOR AND FORCE NOT SEEN IN A GENERATION OF IRISH DIPLOMATS.

AN IMPASSIONED ADVOCATE OF MODERATION, HE TRAVELED THE COUNTRY TO STEM THE SENTIMENTAL TIDE OF MONEY AND SUPPORT POURING INTO THE COFFERS OF THE IRA. HE TOLD KERRY MEN IN CHICAGO AND MAYO MEN IN DETROIT THAT THEY MUST NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE VIOLENCE THAT HAS CLAIMED 2,000 DEATHS AND 20,000 CASUALTIES IN ULSTER IN THE LAST 10 YEARS. IRISH UNITY MUST AND CAN BE ACHIEVED, HE EMPHASISED, BUT ONLY WITHOUT VIOLENCE AND WITH THE CONSENT OF THE PROTESTANTS.

DONLON, WHO HAD ACQUIRED INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF US POLITICS IN A PREVIOUS POST IN BOSTON, BROUGHT TOGETHER FOUR IRISH-AMERICAN HEAVIES - KENNEDY, MOYNIHAN, O'NEILL AND CAREY - FOR A SERIES OF MUCH-ATTENDED ST PATRICK'S DAY DECLARATIONS AGAINST THE IRA. IN THEIR MOST RECENT STATEMENT, THEY CALLED FOR "AN END TO THE DIVISION OF IRELAND" - A SENTIMENT THAT IS ECHOED IN A PLANK IN THE DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM.

BUT DONLON'S ANTI-TERRORISM CAMPAIGN EARLY BROUGHT HIM INTO CONFRONTATION WITH BIAGGI, WHO AT THE INSTIGATION OF THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS, THE MOST VOCIFEROUS OF THE IRISH SOCIETIES, HAD FORMED THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON IRELAND, AN ORGANIZATION OF SOME 132 CONGRESSMEN. BIAGGI AND THE CAUCUS SWEAR THEY ARE EQUALLY OPPOSED TO VIOLENCE AS A WAY OF SOLVING THE ANCIENT QUARRELS OF THE NORTH, BUT BIAGGI AT THE SAME TIME PROPOSED A "PEACE FORUM" IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE IRA WOULD BE HEARD.

DONLON, AT A SEMI-PUBLIC MEETING AT THE CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT, STATED THAT BIAGGI WAS SERVING THE INTERESTS OF TERRORISM. HE KNEW IT WOULD GET BACK TO THE CONGRESSMAN BECAUSE A MEMBER OF BIAGGI'S STAFF WAS PRESENT.

WHEN BIAGGI WENT TO IRELAND IN NOVEMBER 1978, THE GOVERNMENT OF PRIME MINISTER JACK LYNCH CUT HIM DEAD. LYNCH HAD PREVIOUSLY SENT THE CONGRESSMAN A LETTER TELLING HIM FLATLY THAT HE WAS A TOOL OF THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS, WHICH INCIDENTALLY DEMANDED DONLON'S RECALL IN A STATEMENT MADE LAST DECEMBER.

BUT WHEN LYNCH CAME TO WASHINGTON LAST NOVEMBER, THE PRESIDENT INVITED BIAGGI TO THE WHITE HOUSE STATE DINNER - PRESUMABLY BECAUSE HOWEVER MUCH HE MIGHT OFFEND THE GUEST OF HONOR, HE WOULD INSURE BIAGGI'S SUPPORT IN THE NEW YORK PRIMARY, WHICH, AS THINGS TURNED OUT DID NOT AMOUNT TO MUCH.

TOLD OF DONLON'S RECALL, BIAGGI SPOKE AS THROUGH A MOUTHFUL OF FEATHERS:

"I THINK HE COULD HAVE CHOSEN A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE COURSE IN CONNECTION WITH THE ISSUE. THERE HAS BEEN DIVISION IN THE IRISH COMMUNITY HERE AMONG SEGMENTS THAT ORDINARILY SHOULD HAVE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER. REPLACING DONLON WILL HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON IRISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS".

BAEBER SEAN MCMANUS, ~~583-83-4-5~~ 35
THE HEAD OF THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS WHICH, HE SAYS, HAS NO OTHER PURPOSE THAN "MAKING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATED IN THE NORTH THE PRINCIPAL ISSUE," CHUCKLED WHEN ASKED HIS REACTION TO THE NEWS, BUT WOULD NOT GO BEYOND THE DECEMBER STATEMENT. IT WAS NOT, HE SAID, "A VICTORY" FOR THE CAUCUS, WHICH, HE SAID, "WOULD NOT BE NEEDED IF DONLON HAD DONE HIS JOB".

DONLON WENT BACK TO DUBLIN LAST MONTH FOR TALKS AND WAS, PRESUMABLY, TOLD TO FOLLOW "A POLICY OF AMBIGUITY" WITH REGARD TO BIAGGI AND COMPANY.

DONLON'S REFUSAL TO COMPROMISE WAS FOLLOWED BY THE LEAK ABOUT HIS RECALL. IT IS RUMOURED THAT HE HAS BEEN OFFERED THE POST OF AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, WHERE IRELAND EXPECTS, FOR THE FIRST TIME, TO BE A MEMBER OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

DONLON HAD BECOME SOMETHING OF AN ISSUE IN IRISH POLITICS, DUE TO THE EXERTIONS OF NEIL BLANEY, AN OLD FRIEND OF PRIME MINISTER HAUGHEY, WHO, IN 1970, WAS TRIED WITH HIM ON CHARGES OF CONSPIRACY TO IMPORT ARMS. LYNCH SACKED THEM BOTH FROM THE CABINET. THEY WERE BOTH EXONERATED. BLANEY HAS BUILT UP A FOLLOWING FOR HIS POSITION FOR "UNITY AT ANY PRICE" BETWEEN DUBLIN AND BELFAST. HE USED TO BOAST OF HIS PART IN THE CREATION OF THE PROVISIONAL IRA.

BLANEY, AS IT HAPPENS, WAS IN THE UNITED STATES AT THE TIME THAT LYNCH WAS REPLACED BY HAUGHEY AND ANNOUNCED THAT DONLON WAS AN OBSTACLE TO UNIFICATION, BECAUSE DONLON IS ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO ANY SETTLEMENT THAT WOULD LEAVE OUT THE CONSENT OF THE PROTESTANT MINORITY IN THE NORTH - ON THE GROUNDS, AS HE HAS TOLD COUNTLESS US AUDIENCES THAT AN IRELAND REUNITED WILLY-NILLY WOULD BE SUBJECT TO THE SAME INSTABILITY THAT HAS RACKED ULSTER FOR THE PAST 60 YEARS.

THE TIMING OF THE MOVE IS STRANGE. HAUGHEY HAS JUST BEGUN TALKS WITH PRIME MINISTER THATCHER ON THE IRISH QUESTION, AND THEY ISSUED A JOINT STATEMENT STRESSING MODERATION. IT DOESN'T GO WITH SILENCING OF THE MOST ELOQUENT IRISH VOICE FOR MODERATION IN THE UNITED STATES WHERE MANY DECISIONS ABOUT IRELAND ARE FORMED, AND SUGGESTS THAT HAUGHEY, AS POLITICIANS OFTEN DO, MAY BE TALKING FROM BOTH SIDES OF HIS MOUTH. CHOOSING BIAGGI OVER DONLON MAY HELP HIM POLITICALLY AT HOME, BUT NOT HERE AT A CRITICAL MOMENT IN IRELAND'S SAD HISTORY.

END END

8/7/80 HIBERNIA WASHDC