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cc 24 Mr. Hennessy (to read first)
1 Mr. [unclear]
4 Mr. [unclear] [unclear]
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NI.37/4

7 December 1982

Ms Margaret Hennessy
Counsellor
Anglo-Irish Section
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Margaret

I enclose a "memo" on the Friends of Ireland organisation which I agreed to produce following a meeting in Congressman Shannon's office attended by the Congressman, Werner Brandt, Kirk O'Donnell and myself.

For reasons of balance and coherence, I felt it best to flesh out some of the ideas discussed and enlarge a bit the scope of the memo.

The text should be regarded very much as a draft working paper. Recruitment to and organisation of the FOI is principally a matter for the congressmen most directly concerned. All we can do is maintain a certain pressure on them but in practice they like to play the game according to their own rules.

X | It would be very much appreciated if the Ceann Comhairle of the next Dail could write to the Speaker before the new year informing him about the parallel group, enclosing its charter and suggesting the Spring visit.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

James A Sharkey
Counsellor

JAS/msg
Enclosures

X I have asked the Dail office to resubmit their draft letter from the Ceann Comhairle to the ~~Speaker~~ ^{Speaker} and urged that a letter should issue before the end of the month, that this is a particularly opportune time following the re-election of the Speaker & the appointment

of the bean bombard, they are to let
me know the position in a day or two

add
after

MILLERS FALLS
OPAQUE PARACHMENT
COTTON CONTENT

3-8-19

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING TO REVIEW "FRIENDS OF IRELAND" INITIATIVE
IN CONGRESS : WASHINGTON D.C. : 23 November 1982

Congressman Shannon hosted the meeting which was attended by Kirk O'Donnell (Speaker's office), Werner Brandt (Majority Whip's office) and Jim Sharkey (Irish Embassy). The meeting reviewed the development of the FOI to-date, examined some of the difficulties which have arisen for the organization and reached a number of conclusions on future strategy and tactics.

The history of the FOI was not discussed in very great detail. Nonetheless, a number of points touched on or implicit in discussion have been set out in the attached memo. Recommendations on future strategy and tactics are set out in Section D, page 6.

MEMO ON "FRIENDS OF IRELAND" ORGANISATION

(A) Background

The FOI emerged in the wake of the Dublin (Haughey/Thatcher) summit of December 1979 when the atmosphere in Anglo-Irish relations was particularly good and prospects for political progress in Northern Ireland seemed promising. There was a determination to build on the contribution to Irish affairs of the "Four Horsemen" and to ensure that the American role developed as part of an overall solution in Ireland and not as part of the problem. In this connection, there was considerable dissatisfaction with the role of the Ad Hoc Committee which offered a platform in Congress for radical Irish-American groups and causes with little or no reference to the concerns or priorities of representative opinion in Ireland. Furthermore, it was known that elected representatives in the Republic and the SDLP in the North were anxious for their part to strengthen ties with responsible and concerned U.S. congressional representatives.

The political context in which the Friends of Ireland were obliged to operate changed dramatically with the outbreak of the second hunger-strike during the Spring of 1981. The marked polarization in Northern Ireland which ensued, the subsequent strains in Anglo-Irish relations and the ill-designed Prior Assembly initiative obliged the Friends to define policies in a context of heightened division rather than one of evolving reconciliation.

The current operational context was noted as one in which all the parties on the nationalist side in Ireland have asked the British for an in-depth review of their Irish policy and are opposed to the Prior Assembly as constituted.

/...

(B) Contribution of the FOI

Notwithstanding the changed context in which it was obliged to operate, it was agreed that the Friends of Ireland had played a useful role to-date which was very much appreciated in political circles in Ireland. The following points emerge in this context:

- (i) An organization responsive to representative opinion in Ireland, committed to non-violence and to the goal of unity by consent has been brought into existence in the U.S. Congress.
- (ii) Its formation has been welcomed by the Irish Government and by the political parties in Dail Eireann. Its name recognition remains high in Ireland and it has become a necessary, indeed unavoidable, point of contact for visiting senior political representatives from Ireland.
- (iii) While unionist opinions vary from the dismissive rhetoric of Paisley to the more sympathetic and informed attention of moderate unionists, those who are most realistic in their assessment acknowledge that it is an organization which inevitably reflects many of the concerns of nationalist Ireland while offering needed leadership on the non-violent approach.
- (iv) The British are very much aware of the FOI; increasingly they have been devoting more time and effort to the management of their Congressional relations and to the presentation of their case generally in North America.
- (v) During the hunger-strike, there is little doubt that the FOI were a stabilizing influence above all in their identification with the centrist approach of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, the SDLP and the Irish Government.
- (vi) The initiatives on the UDA and above all on plastic bullets were appreciated in Ireland as highlighting the need for even-handedness in British security policy which is necessary to prevent the further alienation of Catholic youth. There is some evidence of increased British sensitivity to international pressures on plastic bullets.
- (vii) Through the visit to Dublin in June 1982, an important objective of the FOI was met in the opening of the link with the Irish Parliament.

(C) Difficulties

Notwithstanding these developments, it was considered important to review frankly and face up to certain difficulties facing the FOI. In particular, membership of the FOI has been weighted in favour of Democrats despite the fact that it was established as a bi-partisan body. This has become even more obviously the case with the defeat or exit from Congress of a number of Republican members, most importantly Charles Dougherty. Furthermore, although Ambassador Dailey was known to be favourably disposed to the FOI and Senator Laxalt was a member, the Friends had not so far made sufficient headway in either opening up a dialogue on Ireland with the U.S. Administration or in obtaining recognition from the Administration for their efforts. It was noted, for example, that a number of leading Senate Republicans had preferred to avoid involvement in the FOI and that more House Republicans were identified (however tenuously) with the Ad Hoc Committee than with the FOI.

In a number of important states, e.g. New York, California, Illinois, Michigan, O h i o , the Friends had not attracted the broad congressional support which they had hoped for. The Ad Hoc Committee remained the dominant force in New York State where its leadership and core operation essentially was based. With the defeat of Dougherty and others, representation in Pennsylvania was now well down.

The Friends lack a broad-based constituency organization; they depend for their support on the good-will of a majority of Irish Americans who share their commitment to peace, non-violence and unity by agreement. However, this majority is neither organized nor vocal. It is therefore the radical organizations which Congressmen most often encounter in their districts and these are frequently intolerant of moderate positions. New members of Congress are most likely to have had their initial encounter with the Irish issue through these radical groups.

The Irish National Caucus still seeks to exercise control over Irish affairs in Congress. The attempt of the INC Washington leadership to distance itself from NORAID has created strain and some fragmentation in the organization. The INC, moreover, has not sunk deep roots into the Irish-American community as a whole. It, therefore, depends on a limited, if active and vocal, membership drawn essentially from certain sections of the AOH. Nonetheless, because it is in a position to represent itself as a broadly-based national operation, it can exert a two-fold pressure on Members of Congress through its Capitol Hill office and its regional chapters. Thus, it can still win endorsements from members, particularly at election time, helpful to its overall fund-raising activities (see Irish Echo attached).

The Ad Hoc Committee is the voice of the Irish National Caucus (and other radical groups) in Congress. Biaggi has very little credibility in Ireland, North or South. Nonetheless, he retains a flair for propaganda and he remains popular with many Hibernians. An important objective of the INC is to enhance its credibility in Ireland where it has generally been regarded as suspect. It is presumably nervous of the links which the FOI have forged with the Dail and would wish to undercut these. Through a handful of Irish journalists it has sought to present a dismissive view of the FOI and an exaggerated perception of its own role and that of Biaggi.

NORAIID, the INC and others have sought to generate the impression that the FOI are largely inactive, given over essentially to meeting visitors and designed to keep Congress out of the Irish issue rather than responsibly involved in assisting a solution. It was agreed that a whispering campaign of this kind can be harmful to the credibility of the organization in Congress in the long term. Moreover, within Congress, the FOI face the difficulty of keeping its members involved, interested and responsive

to mainstream Irish concerns without at the same time over-taxing their interest in Ireland. For example, difficulties have arisen in maintaining an interest in attendance at meetings for Irish visitors. Although the House membership is large (some forty-eight members in the last Congress) those centrally involved are inevitably quite few and in the Senate fewer still. (It was noted that this was no less true for the Ad Hoc Committee). At the same time, it was felt that there were some representatives who would like a closer association with the activities of the FOI organization but who find it difficult to relate as closely to its activities as they would wish. It would, accordingly, be useful to see how this situation could be improved.

(D) Recommendations for the future

The following recommendations intended to enhance the role and effectiveness of the FOI were advanced at the meeting:

(i) Broad strategy and link with Oireachtas: As before, it should be the objective of the FOI to maintain a broad-based coalition in Congress responsive to the concerns of representative opinion in Ireland and anxious to advance positions helpful to the cause of peace, reconciliation and unity in Ireland on a basis of consent. For an organization lacking a grass-roots membership, it was agreed that it was especially important to develop the link with the Irish Parliament and strengthen personal ties with individual Irish parliamentarians. The proposal of the Oireachtas to send a delegation to meet the FOI in the Spring of 1983 was a particularly welcome development and preparations would be made to ensure that the Irish parliamentary delegation was properly received and hosted. The maximum publicity would be given to this contact with the Irish Parliament. Furthermore, it was proposed that a good will New Year's message could be sent from the FOI to the members of the Irish Parliament as a means of recalling Congressional interest in the development of the link. A further delegation from the FOI might plan to visit Ireland in the second half of 1983; this delegation might include members in the Senate and the House who had not previously visited Ireland.

(ii) Recruitment of new members; so as to ensure that the FOI remains a broad-based coalition, it was important that a recruitment drive be undertaken particularly with new members in mind. Efforts would also be made to seek additional recruitment from existing members of Congress in the House and Senate. A letter could be drafted for this purpose for release by the FOI leadership.

Senior House as well as Senate members of the FOI could be encouraged to seek wider recruitment into the FOI from their State delegations. Special attention might be paid to the New York, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania delegations. As of now, there is no Senate representation from either Illinois or New Jersey.

An important objective will be to maintain the bi-partisan character of the FOI and thus obtain new Republican support. Ambassador Dailey had made a helpful suggestion to this end which would be followed up. Existing Republican members of FOI (e.g. Congressman Joseph McDade) would be encouraged to become more active.

Ambassador O'Sullivan for his part proposed to assist the overall consciousness-raising effort by writing to new House and Senate members, existing members of the FOI and other members of Congress and following this up with calls.

In recruitment, attention would be given to enlarging the number of Committee and Subcommittee chairmen and ranking members associated with the FOI. It was also thought that a special meeting might be scheduled in the near future which would allow new members of Congress to meet leading figures in the FOI, such as the Speaker, Senator Kennedy, Tom Foley and others. In the context of overall recruitment strategy, separate consideration would also be given to the most profitable opportunity for a visit by John Hume to the Congress. The Irish Ambassador would also be available for any special recruitment meetings.

(iii) Maintenance of group morale and identity: It was recognized that over the last two years a number of original members had drifted out of an active association with the organization. This was true both in the Senate and in the House. At the same time, a number of well-disposed members seemed prepared to engage in a more active role. Rightly, the central organization of the Friends was assembled around a small active group and this largely informal structure had proved its worth and should be maintained. Nonetheless, it was important that Members and Senators who become members should feel part of an active organization. In this connection, the following ideas emerged:

- Within individual State delegations, one or two House members could be encouraged to assume a more active role.
- They could be given this task in the first instance by encouraging them to recruit from within their State delegation and from within their committees.
- They could also assume responsibility for providing a forum within their State delegation to those visitors who are not in the first rank of contacts with Ireland.
- Aides could also be identified in these offices and where necessary brought up to an appropriate level of interest and involvement in the Irish issue.
- Selected members might also be given a role in becoming original co-sponsors of FOI resolutions or in seeking support for initiatives of the FOI.
- A role could also devolve to such members in ensuring a flow of information on Irish affairs within their State delegation and/or committees.

- In identifying such members, again special attention might be paid to the New York, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, California and Pennsylvania delegations. Florida and Texas were noted, moreover, as areas with a growing interest in Irish affairs.

It remained for consideration whether the FOI should have their own notepaper with their own letterhead. In this context, prominent non-members of Congress could be associated with the FOI through membership of an honorary committee.

(iv) Range of activity: It was agreed that the FOI should continue to provide a forum for senior visitors from Ireland. There was some feeling that the flow of visitors from Britain had tended to tax somewhat the interest of members and it was felt that such visitors might in future be met by a smaller representative group. Ways and means might also be explored of creating a forum among aides for certain categories of visitors.

As before, the FOI in pursuing initiatives in the period ahead, would remain sensitive to the concerns and priorities of Irish public opinion and mindful not least of the concerns of the nationalist minority in the North. It was recognized that while there were many issues on which the FOI could be active, it was nonetheless important for reasons of credibility and impact to be selective. In this connection, it was agreed that the plastic bullets problem was an important one and that the initiative on this issue should not be abandoned. In the new Congress, a re-tabled resolution could provide a rallying point for new members. Furthermore, in accord with the broad consensus in Ireland, there could well be a need for the FOI in the new Congress to join with others in pressing for a rethink by Britain of its policy in the North. This was an issue, moreover, in which it would be desirable for the FOI to engage the Administration in dialogue.

More generally, it was recalled that the practice of the FOI was to concentrate on the major political problems in Northern Ireland rather than on the whole range of issues arising from the detailed management of Northern Irish affairs. Nonetheless, as with plastic bullets, where particular issues emerged as acutely sensitive ones both in Ireland and within the Irish-American community, these could be given attention. For example, there was a growing preoccupation with the inability of the Fair Employment Agency in Northern Ireland to break the log-jam of anti-Catholic discrimination in employment. This problem could merit further attention.

(v) Contacts with the Administration: It was agreed that it would be useful to open up a dialogue with the Administration on Irish affairs. For example, a breakfast might be arranged between leading members of the FOI and a senior Administration spokesman. Judge Clark was, of course, the Administration official most personally involved with the Irish issue. At the secondary level, contacts might be initiated with State Department personnel (e.g. Richard Burt).

(vi) Publicity and contact with the Irish American community: As part of the division of labour within the FOI, members could be assigned a responsibility in keeping the media abreast of the role and activities of the FOI. Such efforts could be directed at the larger U.S. newspapers, the Irish ethnic media which is very important for Irish communities in specific areas and, of course, the media in Ireland. This was being done already, of course, but there could be opportunities for a coordination of effort in this regard. In addition, senior members of the FOI through their contacts with leading Irish Americans active in local government, in law practice, in the universities and in medicine might seek to promote a wider knowledge of the FOI. It is for consideration as to the extent State Governors either of Irish heritage or representing States with settled Irish populations and other local representatives should be involved in the FOI.