

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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Extract from report of visit by Minister for Foreign Affairs  
to Washington, 29 September, 1982

MEETING WITH SPEAKER TIP O'NEILL

The Minister conveyed the Taoiseach's and the Government's good wishes to the Speaker and hoped that the Speaker would find it possible in the period ahead to visit Ireland. He referred to the visit of the Friends to Ireland delegation in June and thanked the Speaker for the encouragement he had given to that visit and commended the Friends on the communique they had issued on completion of their visit.

Mr. O'Neill spoke warmly about Ireland, about his visit to Ireland in 1979 and about his family associations both in the South-West and in Donegal. He made it clear that he was always ready to do what he could to help out. In this connection, the Minister explained the difficulties which the British had created for the Government and for the SDLP in pressing ahead with the Prior initiative regardless of all the advice to the contrary. After the elections were over,

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it would be important that the British did not leave a political vacuum in Northern Ireland but rather should seek a new initiative within the framework of the Anglo-Irish undertakings and take the first steps towards an overall settlement. Our friends in Congress could play a role in encouraging Britain to take these steps. The Speaker agreed that he would stay in touch with the issue and looked forward to whatever views we would have to offer following the Assembly elections.

The Minister also took the opportunity to draw the Speaker's attention to the omnibus draft legislation on immigration under discussion in the House and the pilot scheme for visa-free entry for a small group of countries which it involved. For obvious reasons (e.g. shared ethnicity) Ireland hoped that Irish citizens would benefit under the scheme. As a corollary it would be clear that it would be totally misunderstood in Ireland if British citizens benefitted and Irish citizens were excluded from any visa-waiver arrangements. The Speaker got the point and agreed that there should be equality of treatment between Britain and Ireland and that this should apply even if the principle could only be assured in a negative sense.

The Speaker briefed the Minister on current political developments in the U.S., particularly as regards the mid-term elections for the House. He had looked closely at the election forecasts and statistics. His best estimate was that the Democrats would take fifteen seats from the Republicans in the House. Reagan had suggested a figure of 35 but that figure was much too high and represented an effort by the White House to wrong-foot the Democrats and enable the Administration to argue after the election that the Democrats had not received the mandate they expected. A major Demo-

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cratic problem was that the Republicans could outspend Democrats by about 15-1 in most constituencies and through the access to television and the media which they could purchase were in a position to blunt the edges of the Democratic offensive.

There was also some discussion of the oil pipeline issue where the Speaker had agreed to make a gesture of support in favour of the Administration's case to the Congress.

MEETING WITH SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY

The Minister briefed the Senator on his American visit, both in its UN context and its Congressional, Administration and American-Irish dimensions. Senator Kennedy agreed that the Prior initiative was a dead-end street and that the effort must be made after the Assembly elections to re-establish a political momentum. He suggested that during the lame duck session (following the mid-term elections) both he and the Speaker would invite the U.S. Secretary of State Shultz for a working breakfast which at the least would help to sensitivize the Secretary on Irish affairs.

In addition to Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations, there was a brief discussion of American domestic politics. Senator Kennedy indicated that he had been busy campaigning in California and other States on behalf of his friends as well as in Massachusetts on his own behalf. He seemed confident of a good majority in Massachusetts and said nothing to dispel the widespread assumption that he remains a major contender for the Democratic nomination in 1984.

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MEETING WITH THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND

In addition to Foley, Dougherty and Shannon, those attending included James L Nelligan (R-Pa), Brian Donnelly (D-Mass), Lawrence Coughlin (R-Pa), James J Howard (D-NJ), Geraldine Ferraro (D-NY), Bernard J Dwyer (D-NJ), Dan Lungren (R-Cal), Jonathan Bingham (D-NY), Don Bonker (D-Wash), and Congressman Joseph D Early (D-Mass); Senator Joseph Biden (D-Del). A number of offices (e.g. Moynihan, Laxalt, Boland) were represented by senior aides.

The Minister availed of the opportunity to thank members for their interest and support and for the initiatives they had taken reflecting their continuing concern about the Northern Ireland problem. The Minister briefed the Friends along the lines of the remarks which he had prepared in advance, amplifying and clarifying particular points where necessary. In this connection, he made it clear that peaceful reunification remained the essential goal. Britain, in view of its long involvement in and frequent mismanagement of the problem, had a special responsibility for encouraging reconciliation and unity. The way ahead had been pointed in the Anglo-Irish Summit agreement of December 1980. It was important that Britain avail of the machinery established at the Summit.

In response to a question from Congressman Bingham of New York as to a possible U.S. role, the Minister reiterated (amplifying and clarifying on background) that following the Assembly elections it would be imperative that the British did not leave a political vacuum. While American legislators would obviously wish to reach their own conclusion on how they could best assist, continued Congressional interest and continued Administration concern could be useful

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in ensuring that the British took the right initial steps forward.

Congressman Jim Shannon, referring to comments which had been made by visiting British spokesmen, gave the Minister the opportunity to explain Government policy on the Falklands both in relation to sanctions and our initiatives in support of a peaceful settlement through the U.N. The Minister also spelled out clearly that the problem of British refusal to consult on the Prior initiative preceeded the Falklands crisis and should in no way be regarded as a consequence of Irish Falklands policy, as the British have some times put it about.

Congressman Dougherty wondered if there had been any progress made towards the establishment of an all-Ireland police force. The Minister explained that the issue had received little consideration; there were many obstacles in the face of such a proposal e.g. the fact that the RUC did not have the confidence of the Northern minority and indeed of nationalists throughout Ireland because of its record as a partisan police-force. Cooperation between the security forces was of course operating successfully. But, it was essential to take political initiatives which would have the effect of outflanking extremist elements and easing the security burden. Security measures on their own offered no solution to the problems of Northern Ireland.

The Minister's remarks and general presentation were sympathetically received by the group who clearly are anxious to see genuine political progress being made in Northern Ireland and in Anglo-Irish relations.

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