

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code: 2013/27/1628

Creation Date(s): [13 September 1983]

Extent and medium: 5 pages

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Access Conditions: Open

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CONVERSATION WITH PRESS OFFICER AT BRITISH EMBASSY

BD 13/7/87

A NUMBER OF ISSUES WHICH AROSE IN THE COURSE OF A CONVERSATION ON FRIDAY LAST WITH CYRIL GRAY OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY MAY BE OF INTEREST. (TELEX TYPED ON 12/9 BUT UNABLE TO TRANSMIT DUE TO BAD LINES.) AS YOU KNOW, GRAY WHO IS FROM BELFAST WAS APPOINTED TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY AS A RESULT OF PRESSURE FROM MOLYNEAUX AND POWELL AT THE HEIGHT OF THE 1981 HUNGER STRIKE. HIS ROLE IN THE BRITISH EMBASSY HAS SOMETIMES GIVEN RISE TO A CERTAIN UNEASE AMONG HIS COLLEAGUES WHO ARE CAUTIOUS ABOUT THE POLITICAL ORIGINS OF HIS APPOINTMENT AND HIS STRONG, IF QUIET, TENDENCY TO PRESENT TO THE MEDIA AN IDENTITY BETWEEN BRITISH AND UNIONIST POSITIONS ON THE NORTH. HE WAS, UNTIL RECENTLY, LIMITED IN HIS ACCESS TO CAPITOL HILL WHICH REMAINED THE EXCLUSIVE ROLE OF HIS COLLEAGUE STEPHEN WALL, A FORMER PRIVATE SECRETARY TO DAVID OWEN, WHO TOLD ME THAT HE HAD SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED STANDING FOR THE SDP IN THE LAST BRITISH ELECTION. WALL HAS NOW RETURNED TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND GRAY CLEARLY WANTS, AND HOPES FOR, A GREATER ENTREE TO THE HILL. HAROLD MCCUSKER, WHEN HE VISITED WASHINGTON ON 15 MARCH LAST, TOLD ME, DESPITE INITIAL DOUBTS ABOUT GRAY (ARISING POSSIBLY FROM HIS CLOSENESS TO MOLYNEAUX) THAT HE THOUGHT GRAY WAS MAKING A USEFUL CONTRIBUTION WITHIN THE BRITISH EMBASSY AND MIGHT HAVE GREATER CONTACT ON THE HILL WHERE, AS MCCUSKER SAW IT, THE IRISH EMBASSY'S IMPACT "NEEDED TO BE BALANCED".

ANGLO-AMERICAN SUMMIT

2. GRAY SAID THAT MRS THATCHER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON WILL BE BRIEF, ARRIVING LATE ON 27 OR EARLY 28 SEPTEMBER FROM OTTAWA AND DEPARTING ON 29 SEPTEMBER. THE FCO AND BRITISH EMBASSY WANTED A MORE EXTENSIVE PROGRAMME HERE BUT, ACCORDING TO GRAY, SHE DOES NOT LIKE TO BE AWAY FROM LONDON FOR TOO LONG. AT THE SAME TIME, THE PROGRAMME WILL BE CROWDED AND THE VISIT HIGH PROFILE BOTH IN SUBSTANTIVE MEETINGS AND IN MEDIA CONTACTS. SINCE THERE ARE NO SERIOUS OUTSTANDING BILATERAL ISSUES, THE CENTREPIECE WILL BE THE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT AIMED AT UNDERLINING SHARED CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGIES AND, TO USE GRAY'S PHRASE "THE CLOSENESS OF THE KISSING COUSINS RELATIONSHIP". WHILE IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL HAVE ANNOUNCED HIS DECISION ABOUT A SECOND TERM NONETHELESS THE SUCCESSES OF MRS THATCHER IN BRITAIN WILL BE USED TO JUSTIFY THE DESIRABILITY OF "STAYING THE COURSE" IN THE U.S. THE AGENDA FOR THE SUMMIT WILL INCLUDE:

- THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (INCLUDING THE ROLE OF THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON).
- EAST WEST RELATIONS (OBVIOUSLY TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE KAL INCIDENT - GRAY IN AN ASIDE SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT WE WOULD HAVE PROBLEMS WITH REFUSING LANDING RIGHTS TO AEROFLOT AT SHANNON BUT WHEN I REMARKED THAT PUNITIVE ACTION ALWAYS CAUSED CONCERN IN EUROPE EVEN TO BRITAIN - HE CLAIMED THAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE HAD NO ENTHUSIASM FOR SANCTIONS WHICH INCLUDED AEROFLOT).
- U.S.-EUROPE RELATIONS, BOTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BUT SPECIFICALLY ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, AGRICULTURE AND TRADE RULES (EXTRA-TERRITORIALITY) AND ON THE POLITICAL SIDE THE INF AND START NEGOTIATIONS IN GENEVA AND THE DEPLOYMENT OF PERSHING II AND CRUISE MISSILES IN EUROPE BY THE END OF 1983.

3. I DID NOT ENQUIRE AS TO WHETHER HE EXPECTED NORTHERN IRELAND TO BE ON THE AGENDA AND HE DID NOT VOLUNTEER A VIEW. NONETHELESS IT WAS CLEAR FROM HIS SUBSEQUENT COMMENTS THAT THERE IS A BRITISH ANXIETY THAT AMERICANS MAY RAISE THE ISSUE. IN THE COURSE OF THE VISIT THE CHURCHILL SOCIETY IN WASHINGTON WILL MAKE A SPECIAL PRESENTATION TO THATCHER AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY - AN OCCASION THAT WILL HAVE A HIGH PROFILE MEDIA FOCUS AND WILL BE PRESENTED AS A CELEBRATION OF THE "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP".

4. PERHAPS CONSCIOUS OF MY UNSPOKEN INTEREST IN WHETHER OR NOT NORTHERN IRELAND WOULD BE ON THE AGENDA FOR THE SUMMIT, GRAY SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THATCHER'S ATTITUDE TO THE NORTH. HIS VIEWS, WHILE REVEALING NOTHING PARTICULARLY REMARKABLE, EMPHASISED THREE POINTS:

- (A) THAT MRS THATCHER HAD NO STRONG IDEOLOGICAL VIEW ON NORTHERN IRELAND OTHER THAN PERHAPS HAVING A GENERAL FEELING THAT THE UNITED KINGDOM AT THE END OF HER TERM IN OFFICE, SHOULD HAVE THE SAME TERRITORIAL EXTENT AS WHEN SHE ASSUMED OFFICE. NONETHELESS, HE AT TIMES SHARED THE DOUBTS OF MANY UNIONISTS THAT FOR MRS THATCHER A CONCEPT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM MIGHT WELL NOT INCLUDE NORTHERN IRELAND;
- (B) THAT MRS THATCHER HAD STRONG ANTI-DEVOLUTION INSTINCTS WHICH HE FELT HAD PLAYED A ROLE IN HER ARGUMENTATION AGAINST THE INITIAL MORE AMBITIOUS PRIOR PROPOSALS THAT WERE DISCUSSED IN LATE 1981; AND
- (C) THAT SHE REACTS VERY BADLY TO "OUTSIDE" PRESSURE ON NORTHERN IRELAND (AS AN EXAMPLE HE SUGGESTED THAT SHE ONLY BECAME SUPPORTIVE OF THE PUBLISHED PRIOR ASSEMBLY PROPOSALS WHEN SHE BECAME AWARE THAT THE FORMER TAOISEACH WAS OPPOSED TO THEM).

5. TAKING UP THIS LAST POINT ABOUT MRS THATCHER'S RESENTFUL ATTITUDE TO OUTSIDE PRESSURE, GRAY WENT ON TO SUGGEST THAT SHE WOULD REACT IN A HOSTILE WAY TO PRESSURE FROM THE UNITED STATES WHETHER THAT PRESSURE CAME FROM THE ADMINISTRATION, THE CONGRESS OR THE AMERICAN/IRISH COMMUNITY. WHEN HE REFERRED TO THE ADMINISTRATION, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE BRITISH CONTINUE TO HAVE SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF JUDGE CLARK IN INFLUENCING THE PRESIDENT FROM WITHIN THE WHITE HOUSE. AT ONE STAGE IN OUR CONVERSATION, GRAY REFERRED TO HIM AS A "NON-REFORMED NATIONALIST". THERE IS CLEARLY AN ANXIETY THAT DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY CLARK WOULD BE MOTIVATED TO PROPOSE THAT THE PRESIDENT RAISE NORTHERN IRELAND WITH MRS THATCHER IN THE COURSE OF THE SUMMIT. GRAY THEN WENT ON TO TALK ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE FRIENDS IN RAISING NORTHERN IRELAND IN THE CONGRESS. WHILE HE ADMITTED THAT THE FRIENDS HAD PLAYED A VERY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN SEEKING TO RESPOND TO THE REAL PROBLEMS OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND TO CONFRONT THE INC INSPIRED AGENDA AND PROPAGANDA OF THE BIAGGI GROUP WHICH HE SAW AS HAVING CERTAINLY DECREASED IN INFLUENCE IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS (AS A RESULT OF THE FORMATION OF THE FRIENDS), HE NONETHELESS WAS CONCERNED ABOUT WOOKXVPSAL=X:04

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DECREASED IN INFLUENCE IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS (AS A RESULT OF THE FORMATION OF THE FRIENDS), HE NONETHELESS WAS CONCERNED ABOUT A NUMBER OF THE ISSUES THAT THE FRIENDS HAVE RAISED IN PARTICULAR PLASTIC BULLETS AND THE BANNING OF THE UDA. CONTRARY TO BRITISH EMBASSY BRIEFING LAST ST PATRICK'S DAY GRAY DENIED THAT THEY HAD DIFFICULTY WITH THE KENNEDY/SHANNON RESOLUTION.

MULTI-PARTY VISIT FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

6. GRAY TOLD ME THAT THE FORTHCOMING ANDY MULLIGAN ORGANISED MULTI-PARTY VISIT FROM NORTHERN IRELAND HAD INITIALLY CAUSED SOME GROUNDS FOR CONCERN ON THE BRITISH SIDE. THE FOREIGN OFFICE IN PARTICULAR HAD BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF PAISLEY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE VISIT SINCE THEY THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY THAT THE VISIT COULD ACHIEVE ITS DECLARED ECONOMIC OBJECTIVE WHEN PAISLEY'S PARTICIPATION WOULD CLEARLY CAUSE A POLITICAL REACTION IN NORTH AMERICA. NONETHELESS, GRAY LEFT ME WITH THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT A NUMBER OF HIS NIO COLLEAGUES IN THE NORTH HAVE ACTIVELY PROMOTED THE VISIT. GRAY HIMSELF APPEARED SOMEWHAT NERVOUS OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT MULLIGAN MAY BE SEEKING A FORMAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NORTHERN IRELAND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD WHICH WOULD BE OUTSIDE THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY HERE. ACCORDING TO GRAY, THE EEC REPRESENTATIVE IN BELFAST HAD PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN PERSUADING THE NIIDB TO FUND THE VISIT. HOWEVER, I GOT THE IMPRESSION FROM SOME SUBSEQUENT REMARKS THAT THE BRITISH EMBASSY HAVE CAUTIONED DENMAN (EC AMBASSADOR HERE) AGAINST TAKING A TOO HIGH A PROFILE IN RELATION TO THE VISIT.

7. GRAY SAID THAT HE WAS GENUINELY SURPRISED THAT JOHN HUME HAD DECIDED TO JOIN THE DELEGATION AND THAT HE WOULD ALLOW HIS NAME TO BE USED "TO OPEN DOORS FOR PAISLEY ON CAPITOL HILL". I ALSO GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT SOME OF GRAY'S COLLEAGUES THOUGHT IT A STRANGE MOMENT FOR OTHERS IN THE DELEGATION TO BE GIVING CREDIBILITY AND RESPECTABILITY TO PAISLEY IN THE UNITED STATES FOLLOWING THE DECLINE IN SUPPORT FOR THE DUP AT RECENT NORTHERN IRELAND ELECTIONS. THE BRITISH EMBASSY HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY DETAILED ITINERARY OF THE VISIT. (YOU SHOULD ALSO BE AWARE THAT MIKE BARRY OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT APPROACHED ME AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT BRIEFING ON THE KAL INCIDENT LAST FRIDAY AND SAID THAT THEY WERE COMING UNDER SOME PRESSURE ON THE VISIT FROM PREDICTABLE SOURCES. HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM THE FATHER SEAN MCMANUS AND ADDED THERE HAD BEEN CALLS FROM A FEW OFFICES ON CAPITOL HILL INCLUDING BIAGGI'S. HE WAS ALSO INTERESTED IN OBTAINING A ~~APPROXIMATE~~ ~~LIST~~ ~~OF~~ ~~THE~~ ~~ABSENCE~~ OF ANY INFORMATION HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE WHICH, AT LEAST UP TO LAST FRIDAY, HAD NOT BEEN APPROACHED ABOUT THE VISIT NOR DID THEY HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON IT.

8. I TOLD GRAY THAT WE WOULD OBVIOUSLY RESPECT THE WISHES OF THE DELEGATION, AS I UNDERSTOOD THEM, NOT TO POLITICISE THE VISIT AND DID NOT ENVISAGE AND INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PROGRAMME. WHILE I SYMPATHISED WITH THE FACT THAT LITTLE INFORMATION WAS AVAILABLE ON THEIR PROGRAMME, IT WAS IMPORTANT ONCE THE DECISION TO UNDERTAKE THE TRIP HAD BEEN MADE THAT WE SHOULD COOPERATE, IN A DISCRETE MANNER (AND BY STRICTLY RESPECTING ITS NON-POLITICAL CHARACTER) WITH THE ORGANISERS TO DO WHATEVER WE COULD TO ENSURE ITS SUCCESS BOTH BECAUSE OF THE URGENCY BEHIND ITS ECONOMIC OBJECTIVE AND SINCE ANY PERCEIVED FAILURE COULD HAVE SRIIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR US BOTH.

IRISH COMMUNITY

9. GRAY HOPED THAT THE MULTI-PARTY VISIT WOULD NOT HELP RESTORE THE FORTUNES OF NORAIID WHICH HE SAW AS HAVING SUFFERED SERIOUS SETBACKS FOLLOWING THE NEW YORK ARMS TRIALS AND THE SUCCESS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO FLANNERY'S ELECTION AS GRAND MARSHALL OF THE ST PATRICK'S DAY PARADE. THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT THEY HAVE HAD TO SPEND ON THE FORMER AND THE DAMAGE TO THEIR CREDIBILITY ACROSS THE UNITED STATES AS A RESULT OF THE LATTER LED THE BRITISH EMBASSY TO THE VIEW THAT NORAIID HAS ENTERED A PERIOD OF DECLINE. I GATHER THAT FROM PRIVATE REPORTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND, THE BRITISH UNDERSTAND THAT FUTURE NORAIID STRATEGY WAS THE MAIN PREOCCUPATION OF THE ADAMS/GALVIN TALKS IN BELFAST EARLIER THIS SUMMER. GRAY SPECULATED, BUT WHETHER ON THE BASIS OF THESE REPORTS WAS NOT CLEAR, THAT THE ADAMS/GALVIN TALKS HAD CONCLUDED THAT THERE WAS A NEED FOR A NEW ORGANISATION IN NORTH AMERICA TO PROMOTE SUPPORT FOR PROVO POLICY HERE AND THAT, AT LEAST INITIALLY, THEY WOULD SEE HOW THE NEW ORGANISATION HEADED BY JIM DELANEY OF TEXAS AND NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE AOH MIGHT BE USED TO ACHIEVE THIS. GRAY WAS AWARE THAT THE CHICAGO MEETING OF DELANEY'S ORGANISATION HAD HAD A LARGE NORAIID REPRESENTATION.

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