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Confidential

Tehran
8 September 1981

Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs

P.R. 3/81

Visit to the Foreign Ministry

1. I yesterday paid a routine call on Mr. Taghavi, Director of the Third Political Division (Western Europe) in the Foreign Ministry who explained that he had been anxious to see me earlier to discuss a number of items but that he had unfortunately been absent from the country for a considerable part of the summer (reputedly on an arms purchasing mission in Europe and elsewhere).
2. I commenced by expressing condolences on my own behalf and on behalf of the Irish Government with regard to the recent tragic deaths of the Iranian President and Prime Minister. I then asked if Iran's policy with regard to relations with the countries of Western Europe had developed in recent months. In reply he referred simply to Foreign Minister Mousavi's speech to the Diplomatic Corps on 20 July, adding that the unequal relationships of the past could not be renewed and that, in line with the dictum of neither East nor West, Iran was now giving priority to its relationship with the Third World. He saw no reason, however, why there should not be excellent relations between Iran and a neutral country such as Ireland which was not a member of a military alliance. He then said that the Foreign Ministry had been giving favourable consideration for some time to the question of opening an Embassy in Dublin. I did not respond to this but simply asked him if he had visited Ireland during his trip abroad or if it was intended to send an official delegation to Ireland in the near future to discuss the issue, the response to both questions being in the negative. (Given the difficulties which have been caused recently by the attacks on Iranian Embassies in several European capitals, it is probably fortunate that there is no official Iranian presence in Dublin at the present time).



3. Mr. Taghavi then raised the question of Northern Ireland and asked me to explain the Irish Government's position. He said that Iran's sympathy for the IRA was well-known although he understood that the organisation was illegal not only in Northern Ireland but in the Republic as well. I confirmed this and explained that, however honourable the aims of the IRA might be, their methods were repugnant to the Irish Government and to the vast majority of the Irish people. The comparatively minor electoral success which IRA supporters had enjoyed in recent months had to be seen in the special circumstances surrounding the H-Block hunger strike. Successive Irish Governments freely elected by the people of Ireland were the true representatives of the Irish people and it was to be hoped that all foreign Governments would accept this fact and not give their support to a small terrorist group with little or no popular backing. For this reason, the Irish Government would naturally be distressed if material aid were to be given to the IRA by Foreign Governments or institutions. I went on to outline in some detail the historical background to the problem explaining the artificial nature of Northern Ireland but stressed that the wrongs of the past could not be rectified by violence in the present and requested that support be given to the Irish Government's view that it was essential to work towards a political settlement which would allow the Irish people North and South to come together in a unity of hearts and minds and not merely in a geographical or political sense. Mr. Taghavi agreed with my sentiment that there had already been too much suffering and too many deaths in Northern Ireland both in the H-Blocks and through violence in the streets. He thanked me for my analysis which he said others in the Ministry would find most useful given the complexity of the problem and the dearth of reliable information. I said that some of the reports on the Northern Ireland situation which appeared in the Iranian press and media were not always fully accurate and I would be pleased to give a further briefing to him or to anyone else on any aspect of the situation should he so wish. I agreed to send him all recent Government statements on the issue.



4. Referring to the religious aspects of what we had just been discussing, I then raised, in accordance with instructions, the question of the alleged persecution of members of the Baha'i faith in Iran, stressing naturally that I had no wish to interfere in any way in the internal affairs of the country. I noted, however, that because of our history and because of the present tragic situation in Northern Ireland, the Irish people were very conscious of the horrors of religious discrimination and reports which had been appearing in the international press concerning the Baha'is had led to some concern in Ireland. Mr. Taghavi gave no impression of taking offence at my remarks but responded on the lines of the official Iranian position that any punitive action taken against individual Baha'is was solely on account of criminal activities for which they had been convicted. Such activities included subversive links with Imperialist and Zionist agents. I told him I would convey his reply to my authorities.
5. Mr. Taghavi then turned to the war with Iraq and implied that he could see no prospect of an early conclusion. He said that the United Nations appeared to have lost interest in trying to bring about a settlement and no initiative had been taken by Secretary-General Waldheim's personal representative, Mr. Palme, since his visit to the region some months ago. He could only conclude that it was to the benefit of the super-powers to prolong the conflict. He wondered why so few States had spoken out against the Iraqi aggression and said that Iran finds it difficult to understand why so many countries continue to have normal relations with Iraq and even to sign new agreements with the Iraqi Government. (Whether this was intended to be a pointed reference to the initialling of the draft Cooperation Agreement between ourselves and Iraq in Dublin last June, I simply cannot say).
6. To conclude, I referred to the situation in Afghanistan and wondered if Iran would be prepared to give its support to the EEC initiative on the issue. Mr. Taghavi replied that the problem was one for the Afghan people to resolve for themselves and suggested that the EEC should talk directly to the Afghans if they wished to help in finding a solution.



While he agreed that the regime of Barbrak Kamal was not representative of the Afghan people and that the Russian invasion was totally unjustified, he asked why the EEC - who he stressed had implemented sanctions against Iran over the American hostages issue - had taken no action whatsoever against the Soviet Union for its act of aggression against Afghanistan. I accepted this as a valid point but when I asked him if the Iranian Government intended to take any measures, whether economic or otherwise, against the Soviet Union, he replied that Iran was a small country with considerable difficulties of its own in implementing its Revolution and could not be expected to take such action.

7. My entire interview with Mr. Taghavi was conducted in an atmosphere of considerable cordiality and with complete respect for each other's point of view. Before it is felt, however, that the Iranian administration is adopting a more rational and considered approach to its relations with the outside world, it must be stressed that Mr. Taghavi is one of the few senior officials in the Foreign Ministry remaining from pre-revolutionary days. While apparently trusted by the present administration and willing to faithfully enunciate official policy, Mr. Taghavi's general attitude and Westernised approach are such that he is unfortunately not representative of the vast majority of his colleagues.

Miall Holohan

Charge d'Affaires a.i.