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has or would give any sort of undertaking to the British about this?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Maybe I'll be discussing that in some private depth with the Prime Minister or others when I'm there. And maybe that's a better way to do it than speculating on it here. But I don't want to kind of be mysterious. But I just think on matters relating to the Argentine and given the U.K. position, that it'd be better to do it that way.

MR. BARRON: But can I just press you on this --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You can try.

MR. BARRON: -- Mr. Vice President? Is there any imminent possibility of change in that direction --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well --

MR. BARRON: -- because we know the Argentines would like the arms?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I wouldn't say dramatic shifts in regular positions. But, again, I think I will have some matters to discuss on that, but I'd much prefer to do it privately, respectfully.

MR. BARRON: On the question of Ireland, the other day after the re-election of Mrs. Thatcher, several Congressmen here suggested that she should make some new moves in -- this regards Ulster and the Ulster problem. Now, would you lend any weight to that sort of suggestion?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I noticed that -- I think that she agreed to see Mr. Fitzgerald. And that's a good thing. Our position is -- we're not trying to intervene in somebody's internal affairs. It would be presumptuous. It would be wrong. We have deplored terror. We've deplored violence.

We would favor the kind of thing that Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Fitzgerald will do, sit down and discuss these problems. But, again, I don't see -- and I know there have been some voices raised on this. Everybody in our country wants to see peace and tranquility there. But we're also respectful of the realities there.

And we think that the kinds of talks that are being undertaken, post Stuttgart talks, are good. But we're not going to be calling publicly for the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to do something different.

MR. BARRON: Turning to a crisis in your own backyard, Central America, there seems some ambiguity about whether or not there's any possibility of American troops being sent there.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't see why there's any ambiguity at all. I heard Fritz Mondale saying he thought troops were going down there. But what the people in the U.K. have to understand is we're going into that silly season, that ever-lengthening campaign season where every comment like that has to put a large -- discount factor on it for pure, gut democratic politics.

The President has said, "No troops." And that's what the people in Europe ought to listen to. He's the President of the United States. But I do want to discuss on my visit our whole policy there because I think there's some misunderstanding about what it is we want and what we'd like to see in this hemisphere.

MR. MULLANE: Mr. Vice President, perhaps unkindly, your last visit to Europe was described as a public relations exercise rather than a purposeful diplomatic mission.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Who described it that way? What unfair critic is it?

MR. MULLANE: But how would you describe your trip to Ireland? Does that come into the category of a public relations exercise?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It comes into the category of touching base with a strong, staunch friend, and explaining the U.S. position on very important matters, hearing first-hand from the Prime Minister and others Ireland's position. I resent that suggestion that, when somebody does that, that that is pure public relations. The United States must consult. Our last visit resulted in some concrete changes in intermediate nuclear force position. And so I guess anytime you try to do anything, somebody is going to make that comment that it is -- I do not think it was the public perception. It should not be of this trip.

MR. MULLANE: It was suggested last week in Congress that Mrs. Thatcher, whom you will be meeting before you meet Dr. Fitzgerald, should launch a new initiative on Northern Ireland. Will you be urging her to do something of that nature?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. I will not. But I will be urging -- I think the idea that Mr. Fitzgerald and Ms. Thatcher are going to sit down and talk is a good kind of thing. The U.S. position is clearly known. We oppose violence. We like to see matters peacefully resolved. But I did hear some voices rise. But I do not recall any concerted Congressional action on this. And you know our Congress pretty well. People will jump up and say almost anything, which is good.

But I think the U.S. role ought to be clear in our opposition to terror and violence, and supportive of any efforts to have discussion, without our trying to shape the outcome. I do not think that is the role of the United States. We have a great affection and affinity for Ireland, historically.

MR. MULLANE: Well, in the context of your opposition to violence, how do you read the results of the British general election within Northern Ireland -- with the election, in particular, of one man who might be perceived on the side of terror?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That is an internal matter for them. It would be like Margaret Thatcher coming over here -- or Garrett Fitzgerald being asked about the make-up of our Congress, and to comment on some individual who is in the political process. I think that would be -- I have been around the diplomatic world long enough to know that that is not too prudent.

But I have given you our overall position. And, you know, the loss of life there has deeply troubled Americans, because we have many ties to Ireland and, certainly, to the U.K. So all I am saying is I hope that discussions will lead to peace and tranquility.

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MR. MULLANE: It could be said critically, perhaps, of United States policy and the Irish question that you articulate all the right noises about peaceful solutions, but that you say, "Sort it out yourselves," which tends to push the problem over to Ireland and Britain. Is there any more --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: (Inaudible.)

MR. MULLANE: Is there any more meaningful role that --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: (Inaudible.)

MR. MULLANE: Is there any more meaningful role that the United States can play directly in the --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If asked by the parties, I suppose their would be. But the suggestion that your question connotes to me -- connotates to me is that we should sit here as though we are dealing with some marionettes, and try to intervene in this matter. And I do not think that is right. That is not our concept of diplomacy. And it is not our concept of how a friend should behave. We would be quite resentful if Mr. Fitzgerald came over here and started telling us how to solve some problem here.

MR. MULLANE: Perhaps, unkindly -- picking up your use of manipulating marionettes -- there has been a lot of criticism in Ireland of your Central American policy.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: All across Europe.

MR. MULLANE: And, indeed, the E.C. Heads of Government urged a policy, last weekend at Stuttgart, of non-interference in Central America. What is your response to that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Our reponse is: we need to do a little educating, because we are supporting democratic institutions, democratic ideals. Eighty percent of the people in El Salvador are going to the polls. We think there is an underestimation. Most people in Europe do not know that three dollars out of every four we give El Salvador goes to economic aid. There is a misunderstanding over there of our intention.

But I would think, when they understand -- and I think it is clearer now after those Libyan airplanes -- about the external support coming in for a Marxist regime, a regime that has humiliated the Pope, that has denied all freedoms of elections and church and whatever else it is to their people -- like Nicaragua -- that there is something at stake for those of us like Ireland and like the United Kingdom that treasure democratic values. So we have to have some good discussions about that question -- on the facts, not on the emotions.

MR. MULLANE: Finally, Mr. Vice President, may I ask you -- it has been suggested -- and Dr. Fitzgerald on last St. Patrick's Day repeated his invitation to President Reagan to go to Ireland. Do you know whether he intends to do so?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I do not know. But I will tell you one thing. I know the President well enough to know that, if there is any possible way for him to do that, he would love it. And he would be well received there. And it is in his soul. It is more than just politics or what he ought to do. What he would like to do, what he would love to do is right there. So I do not know. I cannot help you on the detail. But I know enough to tell the people in Ireland that our President would love that.

MR. MULLANE: Mr. Vice President, thank you very much, indeed.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not at all. We are looking forward to going there.

MR. MULLANE: Thank you.

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MR. KALBUS: Mr. Vice President, what is the political purpose especially of your meeting with Chancellor Kohl?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Just as the meetings that I had with him here and that, more importantly, our President had, it will be to get updated on the state-of-play in Europe. The visit, itself -- you might say -- is somewhat ceremonial, because we are there in Krefeld to pay homage to the 300th year of emigration from Germany to the United States. We need to emphasize the democratic values that join us. So it is mainly that.

But in talking to Chancellor Kohl, if he has not changed in the last three weeks and I do not expect he has -- or months since he has been here, frank give-and-take and exchange on issues affecting Germany, and clearly be prepared to answer questions about any U.S. policy around the world.

MR. KALBUS: Will you have any special message to Mr. Kohl for his visit in Moscow?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. But I will be sharing with him our latest judgment on things, and asking him for his judgment as to how he sees the chance for peace that we all want, the chance for arms reduction that he wants and that President Reagan wants. So there will not be any secret message or new initiative or proposal of that nature that I would be carrying.

MR. KALBUS: What do you expect from the Kohl-Andropov meeting?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I expect that the Chancellor who is very sharp, very strong, just off of a magnificent election victory will have a real opportunity to explore with the Soviets their commitment, if any, to arms reductions. I would think that would come up. And I would hope that he would bring back a positive message. But I must say, we have been -- and I say "we," not just the United States, but our allies -- a little discouraged about what we have heard so far.

It is our side that has been flexible in strategic arms and in mutual balance forces and the intermediate nuclear force. And we want an arms reduction deal. And so does the Chancellor. But he will be in there in a very high visibility position to explore these matters with Andropov. And I hope that he will