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Reference Code:	2016/52/50
Creation Dates:	8 January 1986
Extent and medium:	6 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Misc.
F. 2.

(Indexed)
Uimhir. 520757.

To:

From:

Taoiseach's Meeting with US Congress
Delegation in Government Buildings
on Wednesday 8 January, 1986.

1. The US group were in Dublin to attend a three day meeting with a delegation from the European Parliament. A list of those who met the Taoiseach is attached. He was accompanied by the undersigned and by Mr. B. Davenport, Department of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Martin Burke, Irish Embassy, Washington.

2. Referring to his remarks to the group when he addressed them in Dublin Castle earlier in the week, the Taoiseach said that the delegation might find it useful

to raise questions with him in relation to Northern Ireland, which he had dealt with in particular during his address. Mr. Lantos said that he would first like to raise the contents of a letter which President Reagan had just sent to the Taoiseach concerning proposed sanctions against Libya in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks at Rome and Vienna Airports. Mr. Lantos said that they appreciated that Ireland might be placed in a difficult position because of its trade with Libya but they hoped that the Irish Government would see the importance of firm action against international terrorism. The Taoiseach said that he had only received a copy of President Reagan's letter some twenty minutes before the meeting began and as the annex referred to in the letter was not included in the documentation he did could not give any reaction at this stage to the proposals. The Taoiseach explained the political co-operation mechanism under which the EEC member States considered such issues. Ireland would be consulting their Partners in this way as soon as possible and he understood that a Political Co-operation

Refer to
for 520757
misc.
13
-86

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

To:

From:

-2-

meeting at official level was to be held within the next few days. The Taoiseach said that he had no direct information on a link between the Airport attacks and Libya. It was well known however, that, Libya had in the past attempted to support terrorist activity in Ireland and Gadaffi had expressed support for the IRA.

3. The Taoiseach said that Ireland has suffered grievously from terrorism over the past 16 years and the Government had taken a strong line against it at all times, even in the face of hunger strikes and kidnappings etc. This policy had the support of the Opposition party here as well.

4. Mr. Lantos said that it had to be appreciated just how serious a threat was posed by terrorism. It was being sponsored by a number of Governments and amounted to low grade international warfare, aimed mainly against the United States but also against civilians of other countries. Mr. Lantos said that the President wanted parallel action by Europe against Libya so that this international menace could be stopped once and for all. It was hoped that the Irish Government would go as far as possible to support the measures. It was hoped that the Government would not allow Irish people to replace US professional and technical personnel who might be withdrawn from Libya. The Taoiseach said that the views put forward by Mr. Lantos would be taken into account by the Government here and he commented that it was unlikely that there would be any substitution of Irish personnel for US citizens who might be leaving Libya.

5. As regards EEC-US relations generally, the Taoiseach said that it was of some concern to EEC Heads of Government

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

To:

From:

-3-

that consultation, prior to action by the US in a particular field, did not operate as much as they would like. Europe would hope for consultation in advance of particular initiatives, as the present system, which amounted to a public demand to act, was often counter-productive. Referring to the strong sense of international law which exists in Europe generally, the Taoiseach said that Europeans find it hard to accept retaliatory strikes, such as the recent Tunis bombing by Israel. Such actions, other than in self defence, were hard to understand.

6. Mr. Lantos said that the US were equally committed to the principles of international law. It had to be appreciated however that we were faced with a different kind of terrorism. It was not uncoordinated and you had in effect Government agents operating and availing of diplomatic safeguards to evade arrest and trial. It was necessary to strike at the source of this malaise. The Taoiseach accepted that we were faced with a new phenomenon in terrorist activities and it had to be dealt with. Mr. Lantos said that the consultation issue would be brought to the attention of the US Secretary of State.

7. Referring to earlier discussions with the Taoiseach when he was Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gilman asked what they could do to help in the aftermath of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, given Paisley's attitude and the line taken by the Opposition here. The Taoiseach outlined the significance of Article 1 of the Agreement relating to the status of Northern Ireland. The unionists now had what they never had before i.e. a recognition by the Irish Government that the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland was needed before there was a change in status and that such consent did not exist

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

To:

From:

-4-

at present. These commitments were now enshrined in an international agreement and he hoped that unionists would see the value of them as time went on. Article 1, from a nationalist point of view, contained a recognition by the British Government that they had no interest in remaining in Ireland if there was consent to a united country. This was very significant and the argument could no longer be used that Britain wanted to hang on in Ireland for strategic and other reasons.

8. Having outlined some of the historical background to the Northern Ireland issue and the alienation of the minority community there, the Taoiseach said that the way ahead would not be easy and it would be necessary to allow some time for unionists to see the value of the Agreement to them. The Irish Government were very encouraged by the positive response with which the Agreement had been received internationally and in particular the encouraging words of President Reagan and Speaker O'Neill. This must help everybody, including the unionists, to realise that the Agreement reached was viewed by international opinion as being a fair and reasonable measure towards peace and reconciliation. Continuing, the Taoiseach said that it was necessary now to have concrete action in the economic field, particularly in Northern Ireland. He expressed the hope that the proposals which would come before Congress shortly would have the necessary support. The question of seeking economic aid from other Governments had been postponed until Congress had decided on the level of aid it was prepared to give. In response to a question from Mr. Gilman, the Taoiseach said that the Government had a number of schemes in mind which might benefit from fund assistance.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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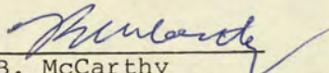
-5-

Officials would go to Washington shortly to have further discussions with the US administration on our proposals for an administrative structure, etc. for the fund.

Mr. Lantos responded that he was the ranking Democrat on the appropriate Foreign Affairs Committee in Congress which would consider economic aid for Ireland and Mr. Gilman was the ranking Republican on this Committee. The Irish Government could be assured of their full co-operation and support.

9. Mr. Seiberling complimented the Irish Government on the conclusion of the Agreement. On international terrorism he said that the US Government had made a sensible statement in relation to Libya. It was regrettable that there were no international institutions to enforce international law. In the absence of this it was important for the US to have the support of their European allies.

10. Mr. Van der Jagt asked to what extent the Irish people supported the Agreement. The Taoiseach outlined the results of opinion polls taken after Hillsborough which showed a very strong majority in favour of the Agreement. He said that while this was very encouraging to the Government it did not solve the problem. It was necessary that both Governments adopt a reasonable approach in implementing the terms of the Agreement and he was confident that this reasonableness would be forthcoming. Both Governments were condemned to succeed - failure would make matters so much worse and could not be contemplated.


B. McCarthy
9 January, 1986.

cc B. Donohoe D7A
S & L Egan, EBC Section

Members of the United States Congress
Delegation.

Mr. Tom Lantos	Chairman of the Delegation (Democrat, California)
Mr. Benjamin Gilman	Co-Chairman (Republican, New York)
Mr. Doug Bereuter	(Republican, Nebraska)
Mr. William F. Clinger	(Republican, Pennsylvania)
Mr. John F. Seiberling	(Democrat, Ohio)
Mr. Esteban Torres	(Democrat, California)
Mr. Guy Van der Jagt	(Republican, Michigan)

STAFF

Mr. Robert T. Huber, Staff Consultant, Committee of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Kenneth B. Moss, Staff Consultant, Subcommittee on Europe
and the Middle East, Committee on Foreign
Affairs
Mr. Hillel Weinberg, Minority Staff Consultant, Subcommittee
on Europe and the Middle East, Committee
on Foreign Affairs
Mrs. Allison Fortier
Ms. Toni Verstandig, Staff Consultant, Committee on Foreign Affairs
Mr. Tom Gewecke, Charge d'Affairs US Embassy
Mr. Steve Worrall, US Embassy