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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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To: Private Secretary to the Taoiseach
From: W. Kirwan, Assistant Secretary

Draft reply to letter to the Taoiseach from Dr. Brendan O'Regan, Co-operation North and Irish Peace Institute about the activities of these bodies and possible funding from the International Fund

I submit, for the Taoiseach's approval and signature, a draft reply to the letter to the Taoiseach, dated 28 August, from Dr. Brendan O'Regan on the subjects above. In view of the past, slightly uneasy relationship between Dr. O'Regan, successive Taoisigh and this Department, I have expanded a little in the reply with a view to:

- (1) striking a positive and general note of encouragement and commendation of the activities and achievements of Co-operation North and the Irish Peace Institute without commitment as to funding from the International Fund;
- (2) balancing this by
 - (a) emphasising that non-governmental reconciliation-type activities alone will not resolve the Northern Ireland problem but that the harsher power realities must also be addressed - experience shows that Dr. O'Regan needs to be given this message;
 - (b) cautioning about the likely heavy emphasis on economic activities, as distinct from reconciliation-type activities, in the allocation of Fund money.



15 September, 1986.



Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

September, 1986.

Dr. Brendan O'Regan,
Chairman,
Irish Peace Institute.

Dear Dr. O'Regan,

Thank you for your letter of 28 August about the activities of the Irish Peace Institute.

I have now had the opportunity to study the papers you kindly enclosed. As you know, the Government and I personally, have valued and supported the activities of Co-operation North and from my examination of the material you sent me, I believe that the programme of the Irish Peace Institute represents a further valuable contribution towards reducing conflict and promoting reconciliation and stability in Ireland.

I believe that, in current circumstances, the paramount requirement for the achievement of these objectives is to reduce the alienation of Northern nationalists through steady and firm implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which provides for the recognition and accommodation, on a basis of equality, of their identity and rights but takes nothing away from the rights, concrete interests, fair entitlements or heritage of unionists. As noted by a number of contributors to the Institute's Conference on Peace-Building, the Agreement



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provides a framework for what will inevitably be a lengthy process of accommodation and reconciliation between the two major traditions present in Northern Ireland. That much being said, I consider that there is great potential for good in parallel, non-political peace-building activities, involving the managed development of co-operation and mutual interests and I share the view expressed to you by President Reagan that non-governmental pragmatic arrangements are critical to the reduction of sources of conflict.

As regards the question of funding from the International Fund, the areas of activity of the latter will be determined in large measure by the preferences of the donor countries. The principal donor, the United States, has indicated a marked preference for projects or activities by the private sector that contribute directly to the economic recovery of the areas in question. Nevertheless, the Fund's objectives include the encouragement of contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland and it will be for the Board of the Fund, advised by an Advisory Committee representative of the two Governments, to decide on how the funds will be allocated among different types of activity.

The present position is that it is hoped formally to establish the Fund very soon : in the meantime, applications for assistance are being passed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs who will arrange for their transmission to the Board of the Fund as soon as it is established. I am bringing the papers



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you sent me to the Minister's attention but I would suggest that if Co-operation North or the Irish Peace Institute wish to apply for financial assistance from the Fund, formal applications should now be prepared and addressed to The International Fund for Ireland, c/o the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. An announcement will be made in due course as to the address of the Fund itself.

I am glad to avail of this opportunity to compliment you on the expansion of Co-operation North and its manifold activities. Your brainchild and its work have grown to dimensions where they are making a major contribution to the promotion of mutual knowledge, understanding and friendships among people of all traditions in this island.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Garret FitzGerald
Taoiseach.



Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

12 September, 1986.

Personal and Confidential

Dr. Brendan O'Regan,
Chairman,
Irish Peace Institute.

Dear Brendan,

Many thanks for your letter of 28 August and the enclosures about the work of the Irish Peace Institute and apologies for not replying sooner. I have been out of the office much of the time in the interval, acting on an interview board in the Civil Service Commission.

I was very glad to meet you in such pleasant surroundings in Co. Clare and to renew contact. I have read the papers you sent me and also the summary of proceedings of the Conference on Peace-Building forwarded for the Taoiseach's attention. They made most interesting reading and indeed I hope to go over the Conference summary more closely very soon. As I told you when we met, I am personally very supportive of the kind of activity being undertaken by the Institute and by Co-operation North.

However, I could imagine that our views might diverge once we got beyond a certain point, insofar as you may be more sanguine than I am about the results in the short and medium-term of reconciliation type activity, and perhaps, I imagine, even a little dubious as to the merits of the approach.



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represented by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. For my part, I believe that there is a political imperative to tackle the harsher realities of power and inequality in the North in a way that might not be too welcome to even some of the less extreme people of the unionist tradition. If we are to break down the alienation of nationalists and wean support or acceptance away from the Provos - and there may be some limits to what can be done in that respect - we have to ensure that the nationalist identity is given suitable, recognised expression, that inequalities in employment are progressively remedied, that reforms which will increase public confidence in the administration of justice are effected, and so on. We cannot evade these issues on the basis that tackling them will sour the atmosphere for cross-tradition co-operation.

What we can and must do is to proceed with full sensitivity to unionist concerns and to let this be as apparent as possible. I believe that Northern Ireland civil servants who were initially hostile or unenthusiastic about the Agreement are beginning to see that we are taking account of unionist concerns and while e.g. pressing for recognition of the nationalist identity are anxious that this be done in a way that will not give any justified grounds for offence to reasonable unionists. We also, of course, have to deliver, and to be seen to do so by unionists, in terms of hitting the Provos hard by more effective security.

There is little doubt, I recognise, that the unionist reaction to the Agreement, has raised difficulties for the kind of activity Co-operation North have been undertaking:



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for example, the calls for boycotts on business dealings with the South or the threats to Southern hauliers or to those who do business with the South will not make it any easier to get results from your North-South business links programme. But these difficulties have to be attributed to an unreasonable reaction to a non-threatening agreement.

I have always believed that the kind of contact and co-operation you have been promoting could have profound effects in the longer term in reducing misapprehensions, in building a network of mutual interests and so on and that every encouragement should be given to expanding the scope of the work, the numbers involved in contacts and so on. At a time when tensions are high in the North, there will inevitably be difficulties in the way of doing this but the need to do so is all the greater and the benefits may be great, even in the shorter-term, in helping to neutralise the effects of propaganda that seeks to play on latent fears and anxieties.

I apologise for going on at such length about these personal views, although they are, I believe, close enough to the views of Ministers. As regards your correspondence with the Taoiseach, I have seen the letter dated 10 September issued by the Private Secretary to the Taoiseach. This was merely an acknowledgement and should be soon followed by a more substantive reply. I have put up a draft of this, in what I hope, if it is endorsed, you will see as positive tones.



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There are, however, narrow limits to how far we could be positive on the question of funding itself. This is because it appears that in deference to insistent American concern, the great bulk of the funds may have to be spent on promoting directly economic activities by the private sector. It will only be when the Board of the Fund gets down to work, including detailed interaction with the Americans, that it will become clear what proportion of the funds will be reserved for reconciliation and contact activities. The Board is to be advised by a Committee on which the two Governments will be represented but it is not clear how far this Department will be involved. If I have an input, you may be assured that I will maintain a positive attitude to the kind of work being done by the Institute and by Co-operation North. I should say, however, that having regard to the factors I have mentioned and to the amount of the funds involved (only about IR£17m. for the South, after an allocation earmarked for venture capital is set aside), there is no realistic possibility of Co-operation North getting a figure anywhere close to \$20m..

The letter from the Taoiseach will set out the formal position - essentially that a formal application should be prepared and sent to the Fund. If this can be ready soon, before the address of the Fund itself is publicly announced, it should be sent c/o the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I would counsel reasonable speed in getting in an application as there is already a very large number of enquiries, applications, submissions etc..



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Department of the Taoiseach

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I have never been subject to criticism for undue brevity but I hope what I have said in this letter is of help rather than the reverse! I wish you continued success with your work which I greatly admire.

Yours sincerely,

Walter P. Kirwan,
Assistant Secretary.