



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Visit of Taoiseach and Tánaiste to Washington D.C.

St. Patrick's Day 1987

Assessment by Embassy, Washington (24 March 1987)

1. We have reported separately on a number of aspects of the visit (Tánaiste's meetings with Secretary Shultz and the Friends of Ireland and Taoiseach's discussion with the President and also Taoiseach's briefing of Irish media at conclusion of the visit) but I thought it would be useful to provide a brief overview of the impact of the visit from this end.

Reception at Embassy

2. The highlight of the visit was of course the reception at the Ambassador's residence which was attended by the President and a large number of our friends from Capitol Hill (e.g. Senators Kennedy, Dodd, Leahy, former Speaker Tip O'Neill, Majority Leader Foley, Congressmen Boland, Scheuer, etc). Also present from the Administration were Secretary Shultz, Chief of Staff Baker and NSC Director Carlucci.

3. The Taoiseach and Tánaiste met all of the principal guests and the Taoiseach also had an opportunity for a private conversation with the President during the motorcade to Capitol Hill (Ambassador MacKernan has reported separately on this).

Speaker's lunch on Capitol Hill and contacts with Congress

4. The Speaker's lunch on Capitol Hill was also very important from our point of view as the new Speaker clearly displayed to his congressional colleagues his desire to continue in the tradition of Speaker O'Neill by hosting a St. Patrick's Day lunch and by becoming Honorary Chairman of the Friends of Ireland. He has displayed privately since becoming Speaker a keen interest in Irish affairs and a willingness to be of assistance in maintaining grants to the International Fund at the authorised level.

5. The lunch was also noteworthy for the strong bi-partisan element from both House and Senate. Those attending included the President, Majority Leader Foley, Minority Leader Michel, Joe McDade (R-PA), Eddie Boland (D-MASS), Ed Madigan (R-IL), Brian Donnelly (D-MASS), Jim Scheuer (D-NY), and Senators Dole (Minority leader), Kennedy, Biden, and Dodd.

6. The increasing interest and support for the Friends of Ireland was reflected in the largest number of co-signatories ever (157 members of Congress). Therefore despite the loss of Speaker O'Neill we remain in a good position to maintain and develop our support on The Hill.

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7. In informal contact with some of our friends on The Hill since the visit great pleasure has been expressed not only at the successful nature of the visit but on the unanimity displayed in relation to continuing to work the Agreement and the International Fund. The presence in addition to the Taoiseach and Tánaiste of Garret FitzGerald and John Hume has been favourably commented on. Our Democratic friends are also pleased by the President's involvement and his clear message of support which will ensure that the Irish issue continues to have a non-contentious and strong bi-partisan flavour. The White House was also very pleased with the occasion which went off very positively and gave the President an opportunity for a pleasant non-controversial and well-received public appearance.

#### News Media aspects

8. Media aspects of the visit also went well. At the Tánaiste's lunch for the US media on 16 March a wide-range of issues was raised by the 20 or so journalists present. In his introductory remarks and in his responses to individual questions, the Tánaiste stressed the priority issues of this visit to the US promotion of investment and tourism and an effort to improve the position of illegal Irish immigrants. It is noteworthy that questioning on Irish illegals took place in a good-humoured atmosphere and there was no evidence of hostility on the part of the US media to the Government's stated intention of trying to improve access for Irish people wishing to work in the U.S.

9. The Taoiseach availed of his "Good Morning America" interview (transcripts sent to Press Section) to emphasise the Government's commitment to economic growth, the welcome for US investment in Ireland and particularly our hope for increased numbers of US tourists visiting Ireland. He said, for example, "I'd like to extend a very, very cordial invitation to at least half a million Americans to come and visit us this year, they'll find a very warm welcome there, they'll find beautiful scenery, good accommodation, antiquities and places of historical interests, modern sporting and recreational facilities but above all else, they'll find the wit and the hospitality of the Irish people and I hope they'll come in their thousands this year." It must be assumed that a message such as this broadcast to an audience of 8 million people will have a measurable impact.

#### Follow-up action

10. On follow-up action you will be aware that the Taoiseach spoke privately to Speaker Wright and Majority Leader Foley about the possibility of a major visit by the Friends Group to Ireland. This was also touched upon by the Tánaiste in his meeting with the Friends on 18 March (mytelex of 20 March refers). Majority Leader Foley is keen to go ahead with a visit to Ireland in May (22nd to 24th) but does not feel that it will be possible at this stage to put together a larger group than 20. He hopes however that a future visit perhaps led by Speaker Wright could be worked on with a view to attracting the maximum number possible.

11. On immigration we will consult further with Donnelly and Kennedy in particular and make recommendations shortly.

12. In relation to possible stopover by Secretary Shultz in Ireland on his way back from Moscow, I have been in touch with the State Department and I am awaiting confirmation on precise dates. A firm schedule has not yet been agreed with the Russians but the dates being mentioned for the visit to Moscow are in the region of 13 to 17 april.