

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Proposed Statement on Northern Ireland by U.S. Government

1. Four political leaders of Irish descent and of outstanding national importance in the United States, Kennedy, O'Neill, Moynihan and Carey, who themselves called on 17 March for an end to violence in Ireland, are now working with representatives of the United States Government with a view to having President Carter issue a statement on Northern Ireland sometime after mid-August. Mr. Cyrus Vance, the U.S. Secretary of State, has agreed to recommend such a statement to President Carter. Representatives of the four Irish-American leaders and of the Secretary of State met in Washington on Tuesday to agree on a text. A copy of an outline of the proposed text is annexed.

2. The Embassy in Washington has been involved in this proposal since it was first suggested to Senator Kennedy and Speaker O'Neill at the end of May. Acting on instructions, the Embassy indicated to the State Department on 13 June that the Irish Government believed that the proposal by the four political leaders to the U.S. Administration to issue a statement was deserving of support. At the same time, the British authorities indicated that while they were favourable in principle to the idea of a statement they were opposed to one of the key elements in the original proposal, namely a suggested link between an agreed solution between the political leaders in Northern Ireland and the willingness of the United States to assist in any appropriate way.

3. The State Department has now formally consulted our Embassy on the attitude of the new Government here to the proposal. As it is likely that the matter will arise in discussions between the U.S. Government and the British Foreign Secretary during the latter's talks in Washington on Saturday 23 July, it would be desirable to reply to the State Department in the course of this week.

4. As at present drafted, the proposed statement is not a very weighty one. It should perhaps be seen mostly in terms of developments in North America and the desirability of making clear to the Irish-American community the need to avoid giving support to

those pursuing campaigns of violence in Ireland. A statement, such as that proposed, which concentrates on the political and economic elements and condemns violence, and comes from the President of the United States with the support of the main Irish-American political leaders, is likely to have a significantly beneficial result in this respect. Such a statement, it can be hoped, could eclipse the support which organisations such as NORAID and the Irish American Caucus have been enjoying in the Irish-American community in recent years.

5. A further consideration is that of the importance of the four politicians who support the idea. This is the first occasion in recent years in which four such influential American politicians have taken an active and informed interest in Irish affairs and this is a situation which cannot but be to Ireland's advantage. The four would certainly anticipate support in their endeavours from the Government here. It would be important that any statement of our position should consolidate their goodwill.

6. The four politicians themselves are understood to favour a stronger text and a revised draft of paragraph 3 prepared by the State Department in Washington is also attached which attempts to restore to the text the "link" between an agreed solution between the political leaders in Northern Ireland and the willingness of the United States to assist in any appropriate way. If it is agreed that the general idea of the statement should be supported, then it is also suggested that the Embassy in Washington should be instructed to co-operate with those who are attempting to strengthen draft paragraph 3 in this sense. Such a strengthening would certainly tend to increase the impact of the proposed statement here in Ireland. Of course, it is to be anticipated that the British Government will continue to oppose too explicit or too strong a "link" and, indeed, it is important to strike the correct balance on this point in order to avoid a situation in which the proposed statement would be open to attack by hostile Unionist politicians who could allege that the statement constituted a threat or a bribe to loyalists in the North.

7. The present state of the text is, of course, not a final one. If it were decided to support the general idea of such a statement, it would be possible to keep the text under review, as it progresses. Indeed, there would be, no doubt, a number of points on which the Embassy in Washington could usefully advise on the drafting. The Embassy might also be instructed to request the U.S. authorities to co-ordinate closely on the timing of the draft. Consideration of the timing would appear to be dominated at present by the political calendar in the United States. It would be necessary to ensure also that the statement would not clash with events in Northern Ireland, such as the anniversary of internment or the Queen's scheduled visit.

Draft statement discussed in Washington on 19 July, 1977

Note

The text of paragraphs 1,2 and 4 is outline only. The precise text is not yet available to us. Paragraph 3 is the precise text discussed. An alternative text of paragraph 3, prepared subsequently by the State Department is appended.

1. The U.S. Government's policy on Northern Ireland continues to be one of "impartiality" (Note: impartiality is used instead of the previously used term "non-involvement"). The U.S. Government wishes to see an end to the violence and "a solution involving both communities" but the U.S. would not presume to dictate the form such a solution should take.

2. I call on all Americans to refrain from any action which might result in further violence in Northern Ireland. I have instructed federal agencies to continue to take all actions necessary to prevent, investigate and prosecute those who would break our laws in this regard.

3. "At the same time the people of Northern Ireland should know that they have our complete support in their quest for a peaceful and just society which is the right of all and which they have sought so long. It is a tribute to the attraction of the territory and people of Northern Ireland that in spite of the uncertainty caused by a small minority, investment as a whole has continued at a good level. I would encourage investors to continue to regard Northern Ireland, as an attractive location since a dynamic economy will benefit the quest for stability there".

4. For my part I stand entirely with those in the United States who support peace in Northern Ireland and I reject the position of those who support violence.

Alternative text of paragraph 3 -

Drafted by U.S. State Department to meet the wishes of the politicians who thought original paragraph 3 too weak.

"At the same time the people of Northern Ireland should know that they have our complete support in their quest for a peaceful and just society which is the right of all and which they have sought so long. It is a tribute to the attraction of the territory and people of Northern Ireland that in spite of the uncertainty caused by a small minority, investment has been maintained at a satisfactory level. It is also true however that a negotiated settlement would contribute immeasurably to stability in Northern Ireland and so enhance the prospects for increased investment. In the event of such a settlement, the U.S. Government would be prepared to join with others to see how additional job-creating investment could be encouraged to the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland".