

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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Conversation with Ambassador, Washington

Ambassador Donlon rang on 17 December and gave the following brief account of points made by the Taoiseach when he rang the Ambassador on 14 December:

- (1) The Taoiseach did not know any members of the Irish National Caucus. He had not had anything to do with them and did not propose to have anything to do with them now. As regards claims by the Caucus to represent the Government, Ireland was not "a banana Republic". The Government was represented abroad by the Department of Foreign Affairs and our Embassies and the Taoiseach did not wish to have "freelancers" such as the Caucus claiming to speak for us.
- (2) Regarding the Big Four, he hoped that his Government would be able to continue the same relations with them which previous Governments had had. He hoped that the Big Four share that aim. He was willing to speak by telephone at any time with Speaker O'Neill or other leading politicians of the group.
- (3) The Taoiseach would wish our friends to talk to Mrs. Thatcher when she is in America and they might rely in general for guidance upon the part of the Taoiseach's Dáil speech of Thursday night (13 December) which relates to Northern Ireland. These remarks represent the rock-bottom basis for talks and contacts between Dublin and London.

The Speaker might make the following points:

- The Taoiseach hoped for the same relations with the British Government as his predecessors had enjoyed
- The British P.M. might be reminded that there is no possibility of a settlement in the U.K. context only

- Northern Ireland represents a drain day by day on U.K. resources
- The festering situation in Northern Ireland is a poisoning element between Dublin and London and possibly also between Dublin, London and Washington. The longer this poisonous element existed in the triangular relationship, the more it would interfere between them
- Regarding United States investment in Northern Ireland, the Government and the Embassy should do nothing to discourage private U.S. investment now. However, in order to safeguard President Carter's undertaking in 1977, that he would officially encourage investment in Northern Ireland when a suitable and acceptable political solution had been reached, we should abstain from encouraging or asking the U.S. administration to encourage investment there now. We should not seek to change the U.S. official position which represents a carrot to Unionist opinion and to the British Government.

The Taoiseach asked if there were other issues which might arise between Thatcher and Carter and the Ambassador referred to the RUC arms question, observing that we had up to that point regarded this question as essentially a bilateral UK-USA problem. The Taoiseach endorsed this line and said that we should not get directly involved.

The Ambassador further informed me that Speaker O'Neill had consulted him about introductory remarks which he intended to make when introducing Mrs. Thatcher to the two International Affairs Committees of Congress. The Speaker intended to congratulate Mrs. Thatcher on the Rhodesian settlement and to express the thanks of Congress for British support of America in regard to the hostages in Teheran. As regards Northern Ireland the Speaker intended simply to "take note" of Mrs. Thatcher's recent actions. He intended to wish the inter-party conference in Northern Ireland the best of luck. He proposed to explain the interest in Ireland which

he and other members of Congress had by reason of their ethnic descent and concern about the grave disturbances in part of the land of their ancestors. The Speaker would stress that he and his associates wished above all for peace and reconciliation between Irishmen. Mr. O'Neill would add as a personal remark that he considered that a coming together of the Irish people by consent and in peaceful agreement seemed to be the best formula for ending the trouble.

The Ambassador finally mentioned that Speaker O'Neill had prepared a brief reaction for use in case the British Prime Minister should attempt to say that Northern Ireland was an internal question of the United Kingdom. He would reply that there was in the Northern Ireland problem both an Irish dimension and an American dimension too and that Mrs. Thatcher should not overlook the realities.

*D. M. Neligan*

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18 December, 1979