

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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I spoke to Tassler on this. He agrees that we should also indicate -

P.S.M. acceptability to both communities in any settlement arrangements and

2. the sharing, in l.g. as operated in many areas, of the information with local authorities.

I sent you earlier to-day, for the Minister's attention, a copy of the attached telex message from Washington.

This note refers briefly to the main issues and suggests possible reactions. I have conveyed Tassler's views to Mr

Nelson, D/F Affairs, Dr. Brennan to Washington

It is evident that Speaker O'Neill contemplates action in the form of Congressional hearings. We have always distinguished between such hearings proposed by our friends and held with appropriate terms of reference before an established Committee of the House, on the one hand, and hearings based on undesirable criteria before the Biaggi ad hoc Committee on the other. We could therefore, subject to information which we should now seek regarding the timing, terms of reference, participation and forum (presumably the Foreign Relations Committee), approve Congressional hearings initiated by the Speaker. In any case, as the Ambassador in Washington points out, Mr. O'Neill may proceed without waiting for endorsement from us.

As regards what Mr. O'Neill and Senator Kennedy "should now be doing and saying", I believe we should favour the continuance by them of pressure on the U.S. Administration designed to maintain its heightened interest in the problem of Northern Ireland. They should similarly press their views on appropriate occasions on British representatives in Washington or elsewhere. Having regard to the necessity of ^{letting} the new British Government settle down and show its intentions, we might however recommend that for the next month, or perhaps a little longer, these activities should not be public. It could be held that enough has been said in public to give the new London Government the message and that repetition may prove counter-productive.

Mr. Kennedy

Mr. Nelson

18/5

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P.A. or

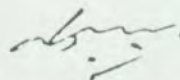
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The remaining question is that of action by the Administration. The Ambassador describes the limiting factors, notably the attitude of the State Department. It is however evident that the pressure of our friends can result in, at least, helpful private intervention by President Carter and his executive. Here again the matter of timing arises. We might suggest that it would be desirable for the Administration to confirm, along the lines of President Carter's statement of August 1977 and his endorsement last year of Speaker O'Neill, that it is interested in and concerned about the situation in Northern Ireland. The Administration might care to adopt the point which the Taoiseach put to Speaker O'Neill on 19 May, namely that "opponents of democracy thrive on unrest" and that Ireland is the nearest neighbour to the U.S.A. on this side of the Atlantic. In a later phase, such as next Autumn, if British policy should appear to have lost momentum or to be failing of its objectives, the Administration might be influenced to convey to London a sense of impatience, and desire to see decisive, balanced political action and confirmation of willingness on Washington's part to assist economically at the appropriate stage.

In regard to timing it should be noted that the Administration might not be willing to take action of the kind suggested above during or immediately after the Taoiseach's visit to Washington (now to fall within the period 1-18 November) so as to avoid an impression of influence.

Since Ambassador Donlon refers to a meeting of the Big Four late this week, it would be desirable to discuss our reaction as soon as possible with the Minister.


D.M. Neligan

9 May, 1979

C.C. PSS
Mr. Swift

sent 4.5.79

(1979)

ARMS SALES SUSPENSION

A review of their policy in this area is a matter for the U.S. authorities and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on their action directly. I understand that the review is being undertaken in the light of concern in Congress about alleged maltreatment of persons in police custody. You may recall the reference to this subject in the most recent St. Patrick's Day Statement by U.S. political and congressional leaders and the subsequent comments by Speaker Tip O'Neill.

As you know, it is Government policy here that our police force co-operate closely with the police in Northern Ireland in order to prevent the violence that has caused so much death and destruction and which has affected both parts of the country. At the same time, we have, of course, always deplored any maltreatment of persons in custody. Apart from being, inherently wrong, any such violations must prevent general acceptance of the RUC as an impartial police force and please obstacles in the way of reconciliation and political progress based on partnership. The Irish Government welcomed the acceptance by the British Government of the recommendations of the Bennett Report-which followed an official British enquiry - and expressed the hope that the outcome of the action envisaged by the would be such as ultimately to increase the confidence of the entire community in Northern Ireland in the process of law.