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TO WASHINGTON FROM ANGLO-IRISH
FOR SHARKEY FROM R. MURPHY

GOV. REAGAN AND N. IRELAND

ALL THREE PAPERS REPORT REPLY OF GOV. REAGAN AT PRESS CONFERENCE TO QUESTION RE N.I. AND GUNS FOR RUC. FULLEST REPORT IS IN IRISH TIMES AND IS LEAD STORY. TEXT FOLLOWS BELOW. THE PRESS QUOTES FR. SEAN MCMANUS AS SAYING "HE HAD BEEN ASSURED BY MANY REPUBLICAN MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS THAT THEY WOULD MAINTAIN THE BAN ON THE SALE OF WEAPONS TO THE RUC AND WOULD MOUNT PRESSURE FOR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO DECLARE THE UDA ILLEGAL".

TIMES REPORT READS :

REAGAN RULES OUT 'INTERFERENCE' BY US IN NORTH
FROM CONOR OCLERY IN LOS ANGELES

MR RONALD REAGAN, US PRESIDENT-ELECT, SAID HERE YESTERDAY THAT THE UNITED STATES COULD NOT INTERFERE OR INTERVENE IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

GOVERNOR REAGAN SAID, NEVERTHELESS, THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE MORE THAN EAGER TO HELP IN THE "TRAGIC SITUATION" IN IRELAND. HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE IRISH TIMES AT HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE SINCE HIS LANDSLIDE VICTORY OVER PRESIDENT CARTER IN THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

ASKED ABOUT THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S SUSPENSION OF THE SALE OF US WEAPONS TO THE RUC, GOVERNOR REAGAN, WHO TAKES OFFICE ON JANUARY 20TH, SAID HE COULD NOT REPLY TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION OF THIS KIND AT THIS TIME.

HOWEVER, THE EXPECTATION HERE IS THAT US POLICY ON IRELAND WILL CHANGE RADICALLY UNDER A REAGAN PRESIDENCY, AND THAT THE STRATEGY EVOLVED OVER A DECADE BY MR JOHN HUME, LEADER OF THE SDLP, MR SEAN DONLON, IRISH AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON, AND IRISH-AMERICAN POLITICIANS IS NOW IN DANGER OF COLLAPSING.

THIS STRATEGY WAS AIMED AT GETTING THE WHITE HOUSE TO PRESSURISE THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT INTO TAKING ACTION TO RESOLVE THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM. THE TACTIC HAD ACHIEVED SIGNIFICANT SUCCESS. PRESIDENT CARTER HAD TWICE ASKED THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, MRS THATCHER, ABOUT HER POLICY ON NORTHERN IRELAND.

TRAGIC SITUATION

THE QUESTION PUT TO MR REAGAN WAS: "THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND HAS BEEN AN IRRITANT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES. CAN YOU SAY WHAT YOUR POSITION WILL BE TOWARDS THE IRISH QUESTION, AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY, WHETHER YOU WILL REVIEW THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S SUSPENSION OF THE SALE OF US WEAPONS TO THE POLICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND?"

THE PRESIDENT-ELECT, SPEAKING IN THE CENTURY PLAZA HOTEL BEFORE SEVERAL HUNDRED CORRESPONDENTS AND ON EVERY MAJOR AMERICAN TV NETWORK REPLIED: "I CAN'T ANSWER SPECIFICALLY ON SOMETHING OF THAT KIND UNTIL I'VE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK MORE ... BUT I WOULD SAY THIS -WITH THE NAME OF REAGAN (SMILING)- THAT THE UNITED STATES CANNOT INTERVENE OR INTERFERE, BUT THE UNITED STATES, I THINK, SHOULD MAKE IT PLAIN THAT IF THERE IS ANY WAY THAT WE CAN BE HELPFUL WE WOULD BE MORE THAN EAGER TO DO SO BECAUSE I THINK ITS A TRAGIC SITUATION".

MR. REAGAN'S EMPHASIS ON NON-INTERFERENCE IN ANGLO-IRISH AFFAIRS AND HIS ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS LAW AND ORDER IS LIKELY TO MEAN THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT WILL, UNDER HIS ADMINISTRATION, LIFE THE BAN ON ARMS SALES TO THE RUC IMPOSED TWO YEARS AGO.

THE WHITE HOUSE POLICY TOWARDS NORTHERN IRELAND UNDER PRESIDENT CARTER EVOLVED TO THE POINT WHERE MR CARTER UNDERTOOK TO ASK THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, ON EACH OCCASION THEY MET, WHAT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN RESOLVING THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM. PREVIOUSLY IT HAD BEEN THE CONVENTION THAT US PRESIDENTS DID NOT COMMENT ON WHAT WAS REGARDED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT AS AN INTERNAL PROBLEM OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

THE FOUR IRISH-AMERICAN POLITICIANS MOST INFLUENTIAL IN SHAPING OFFICIAL US ATTITUDES TO NORTHERN IRELAND WERE SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY, SPEAKER TIP O'NEILL OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, GOVERNOR CAREY OF NEW YORK AND SENATOR DANIEL MOYNIHAN.

THE REPUBLICAN LANDSLIDE IN STATE ELECTIONS WHICH ACCOMPANIED MR REAGAN'S VICTORY ON TUESDAY HAS MEANT THAT SENATOR KENNEDY LOSES HIS HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL POSITION AS CHAIRMAN OF THE US SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE. HE WILL BE REPLACED BY A REPUBLICAN.

THE OTHER THREE IRISH-AMERICAN POLITICIANS WERE NOT UP FOR RE-ELECTION BUT THEIR INFLUENCE WILL ALSO HAVE DIMINISHED, THOUGH SPEAKER O'NEILL WILL REMAIN AN INFLUENTIAL FIGURE IN WASHINGTON.

THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS, A WASHINGTON-BASED PRESSURE GROUP WHICH HAS TAKEN A STRONG IRISH REPUBLICAN LINE IN ITS APPROACH TO US POLITICIANS, HAS ALSO CLAIMED CREDIT IN THE PAST FOR PUSHING THE IRISH QUESTION INTO THE FOREFRONT OF ANGLO-US RELATIONS, AND FOR SECURING THE BAN ON THE SALE OF ARMS TO THE RUC. THE CAUCUS, AND THE AD HOC CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE FOR IRISH AFFAIRS, ARE UNLIKELY TO EXERT SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON A REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATION.

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE IRISH TIMES LAST OCTOBER, GOVERNOR REAGAN SAID THAT HE WOULD GO ALONG WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S POSITION OF ENCOURAGING US INVESTMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND ONCE SUBSTANTIAL AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED THERE INVOLVING THE BRITISH AND IRISH GOVERNMENTS. HE ALSO EMPHASISED AT THE TIME THAT THE UNITED STATES MUST "KEEP ITS NOSE" OUT OF THE AFFAIRS OF THE GOVERNMENTS IN DUBLIN AND LONDON.

THE AD HOC CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE FOR IRISH AFFAIRS CHAIED BY CONGRESSMAN MARIO BIAGGI, WILL REMAIN ACTIVE IN IRISH AFFAIRS, REPORTS SEAN CRONIN FROM WASHINGTON. MR. BIAGGI LOST AT LEAST 22 MEMBERS OF HIS 133-MEMBER COMMITTEE IN TUESDAY'S ELECTION, MOST NOTABLY CONGRESSMAN LESTER WOLFF OF NEW YORK, BUT HE EXPECTS TO REPLACE ALL OF THEM.

THE NEW SENATOR FROM NEW YORK, MR. ALFONSO D'AMATO, TOOK A STRONG POSITION ON "HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND" DURING HIS ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND IN AN ADVERTISEMENT IN THE IRISH ECHO CRITICISED HIS DEMOCRATIC OPPONENT. CONGRESSWOMAN ELIZABETH HOLTZMAN, FOR REFUSING TO JOIN THE BIAGGI COMMITTEE. THIS INDICATES THAT MR D'AMATO WILL JOIN THE AD HOC COMMITTEE WHEN HE COMES TO WASHINGTON.

MR. BIAGGI DOUBTS THAT THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION WOULD PERMIT THE RUC TO ACQUIRE THE EMBARGOED SMALL ARMS AND ANYHOW THE MATTER "IS STILL HIGHLY PREMATURE."

UNDER THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION THE STATE DEPARTMENT VIEW WAS THAT "HUMAN RIGHTS FACTORS ARE WEIGHED IN ALL OUR FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS." A REAGAN ADMINISTRATION PROBABLY WOULD IGNORE SUCH RESTRAINTS.

HOWEVER, IF MR JOHN HUME, FOR EXAMPLE, AS THE ELECTED SPOKESMAN OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY, REQUESTED THAT THE EMBARGO NOT BE LIFTED, PRESUMABLY HIS PLEA WOULD CARRY WEIGHT HERE.

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