

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2010/53/853
Creation Date(s):	July 1980
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

S 18650

July, 1980.

Dr. Garret FitzGerald, T.D.,
Dail Eireann,
Dublin 2.

(jun S.20757)

Dear Deputy FitzGerald,

Thank you for your letter of 21st July.

I will be speaking at the weekend about the matters to which you refer.

In the meantime I must reiterate that this Government has a clearly stated policy on Northern Ireland, which it is making every effort to impress on all men and women of goodwill at home and abroad.

You should, I believe, consider whether the course you are now pursuing in this crucial policy area is in the best interests of the peace and reconciliation which we all seek.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Haughey

Oifig an Taoisigh, Tithe an Rialtais, Baile Átha Cliath 2.
Office of the Taoiseach, Government Buildings, Dublin 2.



DÁIL ÉIREANN
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH. 2.
(Dublin, 2).

21st July 1980

The Taoiseach, Mr Charles J. Haughey, T.D..
Government Buildings,
Upper Merrion St.,
DUBLIN 2.

Dear Taoiseach,

You will have seen that John Hume, Frank Cluskey and myself, speaking independently on behalf of our respective parties, (which between them represent the majority of the nationalist population of this island), urged on the 9th July, that you clarify at once your Government's position with respect specifically to Congressman Biaggi, and to organisations such as Northern Aid, and Irish National Caucus.

The only response so far to this call came after a further reference by me to this matter in a Sunday Press interview yesterday. This response, from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, made no reference whatever to Congressman Biaggi, as called for by all three party leaders, and confined itself to a rejection of "any organisation associated with the pursuit of violent methods to deal with the Northern Ireland problem".

When asked by an Irish journalist whether this statement meant specifically that the Government condemned NorAid, the Irish National Caucus, and Congressman Biaggi's Committee, the Minister replied "that is open to interpretation". In response to a further query asking him again if he was specifically condemning these organisations he replied: "I don't know anything about the organisational set-up in America".

These replies by the Minister for Foreign Affairs clearly cast doubt on the reported statement by an official Government spokesman that "it could be taken for granted" that the Minister's remarks were directed at groups such as NorAid and the Irish National Caucus.

I have to say that nothing can be taken for granted about the Minister's statement when he himself has said that it is open to interpretation and that he knows nothing about the organisational set-up in America. What might at first have been passed off as an oversight in not re-iterating the condemnations by three previous Irish Governments of these organisations, takes on a different aspect in the light of the handling of the issue by the Minister.

In these circumstances I have to ask you formally whether as Taoiseach, and thus the person responsible for Northern Ireland policy in the Government, you maintain the position of the Governments headed by Jack Lynch up to 1973, Liam Cosgrave from 1973 to 1977 and Jack Lynch again from 1977 to 1979, of repudiating by name NorAid, the Irish National Caucus, and Congressman Biaggi.

over/....



DÁIL ÉIREANN
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH, 2.
(Dublin, 2).

Failure to re-state in unambiguous terms the position of three successive governments on this matter can only confuse the issue in the United States, as may be seen by the statement on an RTE news programme last week by the Rev Sean MacManus, speaking on behalf of the Irish National Caucus, that he presumed that they were "right in thinking that there is a difference between the policies of Mr Haughey's and Mr Lynch - it is our general impression and hope that Mr Haughey's policy will be quite different". Such confusion in the US can only have seriously damaging effects on our national interest by endangering the strong diplomatic position built up since 1972 by successive Irish Governments in the United States, which has contributed so effectively both to the erosion of support for the IRA's gun-running activities, and to the pressure placed by the United States administration on the British Government last year to seek a resolution of the Northern Ireland problem - the first such intervention of which I am aware since 1921.

As the Minister for Foreign Affairs has expressed a somewhat surprising ignorance of these organisations, perhaps I should remind you of their record.

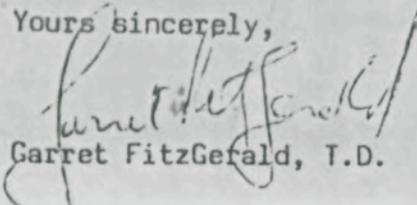
NorAid is the main front organisation for the Provisional IRA in the United States and its Vice President, Matthew Higgins explained its role in 1972 to the Washington Post in these words: "We're supporting the activities of the Provisional IRA". Members of NorAid in various parts of the United States have been convicted of exporting arms to the IRA.

The Irish National Caucus was founded in October 1974, two of its three founder-members being members of NorAid. One of these, Sean Walsh, was at that time formally registered with the Department of Justice, as required under American Law, as the representative in the United States of 'Kevin Street Sinn Fein' and the 'Irish Republican Information Service'. The other, Fred Burns O'Brien, is the author of an article in a New York-paper accusing the National Coalition Government of sending Special Branch men across the Border into Northern Ireland to murder Catholics nominated to the Special Branch by the SDLP, with a view to stirring up sectarian violence. Shortly after its establishment the Irish National Caucus submitted a 50-page document to the US House of Representatives Committee for International Security entitled 'Brief for the Provisionals'.

So far as Congressman Biaggi is concerned you will recall that in his letter to the Congressman on 22nd February, 1978, your predecessor, Mr Jack Lynch, pointed out that the Irish National Caucus had termed the establishment of Mr Biaggi's Ad Hoc Committee as "a victory for itself"; that the Congressman had visited Ireland at the request of the Caucus; and that "we in Ireland have noted your public identification when here with supporters of violence, who have no democratic mandate from our people".

In the light of this information, all of it to my own knowledge available on file in the Department of Foreign Affairs, you will appreciate why I feel that both the honour and the interest of this State require that there be no further ambivalence on this matter on the part of the Government which you lead. I should therefore be grateful if you could confirm to me in the next few days that like your three predecessors in office, you reject and condemn the Irish National Caucus, NorAid, and Congressman Biaggi. In the meantime I shall postpone publication of the text of this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Garret FitzGerald, T.D.