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VISIT OF MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
TO WASHINGTON DC, 29 SEPTEMBER 1982

The visit, which involved the Minister taking a day out of his New York schedule, was focused exclusively on the Hill. Its purpose was to brief our main allies in Congress as well as the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Government policy on Northern Ireland and to explain recent developments in Anglo-Irish relations. A working lunch was hosted for the Minister by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Clement Zablocki. Meetings were also arranged with the Speaker, Tip O'Neill, Senator Edward Kennedy and the Friends of Ireland Congressional grouping.

During his meetings, the Minister identified the problems arising in Northern Ireland and in Anglo-Irish relations because of the Prior initiative which was explained as an ill-designed and ill-fated attempt once again to seek a purely local solution for Northern Ireland's difficulties. The broad lines and emphasis of the Minister's approach are as given in the attached text of Minister's remarks to the Friends of Ireland which was released to the press both in Dublin and Washington. Also attached is the draft text of the remarks which the Minister prepared for his Foreign Affairs Committee luncheon. The Minister drew on this text in making his general presentation to the Committee members but it was not, of course, released to the press.

In the course of his meetings the Minister also sought to set the record straight, where appropriate, on assertions made by British spokesmen in North America bearing on Irish Falklands/Malvinas policy, the principle of consultation as agreed at the Dublin Summit and cooperation on border security. In this connection, the Minister made it clear that the withdrawal of the British from their commitment to consult and

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cooperate with Dublin, as agreed in the 1980 Summit, preceeded the crisis in the South Atlantic. He had been informed at a meeting with Prior in London on 30th March 1982 of the Secretary of State's proposals -- he had not been consulted. The direction taken by Irish policy on the Falklands had been signalled in our discussions with EEC partners and was consistent with our traditional policy of neutrality in armed disputes and our commitment to the UN as a mechanism for arbitration and peaceful settlement. Effective border security and cross-border security cooperation were major commitments of successive Irish Government which we had maintained at considerable cost and despite competing demands on the resources of our police force.

The following is a more specific summary of the Minister's contacts on Capitol Hill:

LUNCH WITH HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

U.S. representatives attending, in addition to Chairman Zablocki, were Congressmen Broomfield (the ranking Minority member on the Committee), Largomarsino (R-Cal), Solarz (D-NY), Lantos (D-Cal), Gilman (R-NY), Dornan (R-Cal), and Congresswoman Fenwick (R-NJ). Committee Chief of Staff Jack Brady, Minority Counsel Everett Bierman and other senior members of the staff also participated in the lunch. The Chairman of the European Sub-Committee, Lee Hamilton, and Congressman Erdahl (R-Minn) regretted at the last moment due to pressure of floor business.

Following the Chairman's welcome for the Minister and the Minister's opening presentation, the discussion was thrown open to the floor. A question from Congressman Solarz on the problem of reconciling the conflicting positions of the two communities in Northern Ireland on power-sharing, gave

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the Minister the opportunity to explain in more detail the Government's position on the Anglo-Irish framework as a means of widening the perspective of debate in Northern Ireland and offering the two communities release from the pressures imposed by attempts to find a solution within Northern Ireland alone. Again, in response to a query from Representative Solarz, the Minister explained the current community balance in Northern Ireland as between nationalists and unionists while suggesting that it would not be prudent to construct policies in Northern Ireland on the assumption that a major shift in that balance was in the offing. Solarz' query seemed to imply that a Catholic majority in Northern Ireland was a short-term possibility.

Representative Gilman asked what America could do to help. In reply, the Minister explained that there were opportunities for an American role. American interest and concern was, of course, already greatly appreciated and was important. Furthermore, the British had come to recognise the importance of the American dimension and were devoting increasing attention to getting their view across here (witness recent visits by Prior and Gowrie). The Prior initiative was foredoomed to failure. After the elections, the futility of proceeding along Prior's path would become clear. At that stage, the United States could help in encouraging Britain to develop its policies on Northern Ireland in a sensible way and to exploit the mechanisms and procedures for cooperation with Dublin which had already been agreed. What was required was that Britain take the first steps towards an overall settlement.

Congresswoman Fenwick explained her difficulties with certain constituents in New Jersey who took positions hostile to the Irish Government and who supported violence. Was there not a danger that these attitudes would lead American

involvement into directions not acceptable to the Dublin Government. The Minister referred sympathetically to the difficulties which public representatives can face from small well-organised groups who resort to bullying and intimidation. It was important however to recognise these groups as a minority in the United States just as they are in Ireland. The vast majority of Irish Americans abhorred violence and their commitment to a peaceful approach would ensure that extremist groups carried no weight in political decision-making. During and immediately following the hunger-strike, the influence of extremist elements increased because the hunger-strike had given them a powerful propaganda weapon. More recently, however, their influence was on the wane and indeed, if real progress could be made towards an overall solution in Northern Ireland, that influence would diminish even more.

Representative Dornan (a right-wing conservative of Donegal extraction) probed Irish policy on NATO, suggesting that Ireland's standing and influence would be increased were we to join with NATO in the effort against communism and that Ireland would be speedily unified following NATO accession. The query gave the Minister the opportunity to explain the Irish position on neutrality and to emphasise our commitment to the Western system of values as exemplified in our Community membership and our commitment to the UN. Fundamental to our sense of international responsibility was our long-standing commitment to peace-keeping. Irish soldiers had an honourable tradition of service in the cause of world peace (Congo, Cyprus, Middle East, etc.) and in the Lebanon Irish soldiers stood side by side with those of the United States and other countries as an expression of our determination to assist bring peace to the area. In response to a related question, the Minister used the opportunity to praise the UN as the only fully representative international institution committed to the maintenance of world peace, referring in this context to the recent report of the Secretary

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General which he saw as providing an opportunity to strengthen the organisation. He hoped that all the great powers would make constructive use of the UN and support the efforts of the Secretary General.

Because it was topical, indeed a leading item in the Congressional debates of the day, there was also discussion of the oil-pipeline issue. Without being drawn into the issue, the Minister explained the concerns of partners on the pipeline and hoped that a reconciliation of views with the U.S. could emerge.

In concluding the meeting, Chairman Zablocki thanked the Minister for his presentation and looked forward to an opportunity to meet again in the future.

X MEETING WITH SPEAKER TIP O'NEILL X

The Minister conveyed the Taoiseach's and the Government's good wishes to the Speaker and hoped that the Speaker would find it possible in the period ahead to visit Ireland. He referred to the visit of the Friends to Ireland delegation in June and thanked the Speaker for the encouragement he had given to that visit and commended the Friends on the communique they had issued on completion of their visit.

Mr. O'Neill spoke warmly about Ireland, about his visit to Ireland in 1979 and about his family associations both in the South-West and in Donegal. He made it clear that he was always ready to do what he could to help out. In this connection, the Minister explained the difficulties which the British had created for the Government and for the SDLP in pressing ahead with the Prior initiative regardless of all the advice to the contrary. After the elections were over,

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it would be important that the British did not leave a political vacuum in Northern Ireland but rather should seek a new initiative within the framework of the Anglo-Irish undertakings and take the first steps towards an overall settlement. Our friends in Congress could play a role in encouraging Britain to take these steps. The Speaker agreed that he would stay in touch with the issue and looked forward to whatever views we would have to offer following the Assembly elections.

The Minister also took the opportunity to draw the Speaker's attention to the omnibus draft legislation on immigration under discussion in the House and the pilot scheme for visa-free entry for a small group of countries which it involved. For obvious reasons (e.g. shared ethnicity) Ireland hoped that Irish citizens would benefit under the scheme. As a corollary it would be clear that it would be totally misunderstood in Ireland if British citizens benefitted and Irish citizens were excluded from any visa-waiver arrangements. The Speaker got the point and agreed that there should be equality of treatment between Britain and Ireland and that this should apply even if the principle could only be assured in a negative sense.

The Speaker briefed the Minister on current political developments in the U.S., particularly as regards the mid-term elections for the House. He had looked closely at the election forecasts and statistics. His best estimate was that the Democrats would take fifteen seats from the Republicans in the House. Reagan had suggested a figure of 35 but that figure was much too high and represented an effort by the White House to wrong-foot the Democrats and enable the Administration to argue after the election that the Democrats had not received the mandate they expected. A major Demo-

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cratic problem was that the Republicans could outspend Democrats by about 15-1 in most constituencies and through the access to television and the media which they could purchase were in a position to blunt the edges of the Democratic offensive.

There was also some discussion of the oil pipeline issue where the Speaker had agreed to make a gesture of support in favour of the Administration's case to the Congress.

MEETING WITH SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY

The Minister briefed the Senator on his American visit, both in its UN context and its Congressional, Administration and American-Irish dimensions. Senator Kennedy agreed that the Prior initiative was a dead-end street and that the effort must be made after the Assembly elections to re-establish a political momentum. He suggested that during the lame duck session (following the mid-term elections) both he and the Speaker would invite the U.S. Secretary of State Shultz for a working breakfast which at the least would help to sensitivize the Secretary on Irish affairs.

In addition to Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations, there was a brief discussion of American domestic politics. Senator Kennedy indicated that he had been busy campaigning in California and other States on behalf of his friends as well as in Massachusetts on his own behalf. He seemed confident of a good majority in Massachusetts and said nothing to dispel the widespread assumption that he remains a major contender for the Democratic nomination in 1984.

MEETING WITH THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND

In addition to Foley, Dougherty and Shannon, those attending included James L Nelligan (R-Pa), Brian Donnelly (D-Mass), Lawrence Coughlin (R-Pa), James J Howard (D-NJ), Geraldine Ferraro (D-NY), Bernard J Dwyer (D-NJ), Dan Lungren (R-Cal), Jonathan Bingham (D-NY), Don Bonker (D-Wash), and Congressman Joseph D Early (D-Mass); Senator Joseph Biden (D-Del). A number of offices (e.g. Moynihan, Laxalt, Boland) were represented by senior aides.

The Minister availed of the opportunity to thank members for their interest and support and for the initiatives they had taken reflecting their continuing concern about the Northern Ireland problem. The Minister briefed the Friends along the lines of the remarks which he had prepared in advance, amplifying and clarifying particular points where necessary. In this connection, he made it clear that peaceful reunification remained the essential goal. Britain, in view of its long involvement in and frequent mismanagement of the problem, had a special responsibility for encouraging reconciliation and unity. The way ahead had been pointed in the Anglo-Irish Summit agreement of December 1980. It was important that Britain avail of the machinery established at the Summit.

In response to a question from Congressman Bingham of New York as to a possible U.S. role, the Minister reiterated (amplifying and clarifying on background) that following the Assembly elections it would be imperative that the British did not leave a political vacuum. While American legislators would obviously wish to reach their own conclusion on how they could best assist, continued Congressional interest and continued Administration concern could be useful

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in ensuring that the British took the right initial steps forward.

Congressman Jim Shannon, referring to comments which had been made by visiting British spokesmen, gave the Minister the opportunity to explain Government policy on the Falklands both in relation to sanctions and our initiatives in support of a peaceful settlement through the U.N. The Minister also spelled out clearly that the problem of British refusal to consult on the Prior initiative preceeded the Falklands crisis and should in no way be regarded as a consequence of Irish Falklands policy, as the British have some times put it about.

Congressman Dougherty wondered if there had been any progress made towards the establishment of an all-Ireland police force. The Minister explained that the issue had received little consideration; there were many obstacles in the face of such a proposal e.g. the fact that the RUC did not have the confidence of the Northern minority and indeed of nationalists throughout Ireland because of its record as a partisan police-force. Cooperation between the security forces was of course operating successfully. But, it was essential to take political initiatives which would have the effect of outflanking extremist elements and easing the security burden. Security measures on their own offered no solution to the problems of Northern Ireland.

The Minister's remarks and general presentation were sympathetically received by the group who clearly are anxious to see genuine political progress being made in Northern Ireland and in Anglo-Irish relations.

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