

E.R.

MEETING WITH THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND HELD AT THE RESIDENCE OF THE
US CONSUL-GENERAL, BELFAST AT 4.30 PM ON 29 MAY 1982

Those present:	Lord Gowrie	Congressman Foley
	Sir Ewart Bell	Congressman Dougherty
	Dr Quigley	Congressman Shannon
	Mr Buxton	Mr O'Donnell
	Mr Blatherwick	Mr Seggerman
	Mr Templeton	Mr Brandt
	Mr Fergusson	Mr Michaud

Mr Foley began by explaining that the Friends of Ireland had been set up to counter Mr Biaggi's Ad Hoc Congressional Committee on Ireland. The group had generally supported moves towards a united Ireland but had explicitly endorsed the need for consent in Northern Ireland. Its opposition to violence had been consistent as had its wish to respect both traditions in Ireland. Lord Gowrie said that he believed that it was now widely accepted in the United States that the problems of Northern Ireland were not of a colonial nature. He was keen for it to be fully realised that both the Republic and the United Kingdom were threatened by terrorism: whatever differences arose from time to time between the two sovereign governments, both co-operated closely in countering terrorism. He referred to the speech made last year by a PIRA spokesman in Mexico in which the threats to Dublin as well as Northern Ireland institutions were made specific.

2. Lord Gowrie outlined the White Paper proposals and explained the relationship of Anglo-Irish links to the Government's initiative. Mr Foley accepted that movement towards reunification could not be determined by either London or Dublin - or indeed the United States -- but was a matter for the people of each of the two parts of Ireland. Mr Dougherty complained that the British Government was not nudging the Unionist community sufficiently hard towards reunification.

/...

Within Congress the Biaggi group was close to the IRA while the Friends took their line more from the SDLP. Nonetheless, within the Friends there were some, including himself, who felt that if the United Kingdom was not more active in pursuit of unity they as Congressmen would be less supportive of the special relationship with Britain. He referred to his membership of the House Armed Forces Committee and suggested that Britain's attitude towards Irish unity could influence his support for the continued sale of Sidewinder missiles to the UK.

3. Lord Gowrie questioned what "giving leadership towards unity" could in practice mean if the consent of one fifth of the population of the island was disregarded. The Government could give many leads in this respect to Unionists but this would not make them more susceptible to the idea of unification. He believed that the alternative to the British connection would not be a United Ireland but rather an impractical, right-wing, and unpleasant independent State. It was important for Americans to realise that the British connection was not maintained under pressure from Great Britain. Even if the United Kingdom agreed that reunification should take place there would still be the problem of the one million people living in Northern Ireland who did not so agree.

4. Mr Foley felt it necessary to explain that Mr Dougherty came from an area in which there was strong and misguided support for the IRA. Mr Dougherty said that his constituents did not accept that there was a British dimension at all in Irish affairs. He had told his constituents that he would take his lead on Irish issues from the Dublin government. If he was to be expected to keep the ancestral emotions of his constituents under control he would need to see the British Government showing itself to be in a definite way in favour unification. Sir Ewart Bell pointed out that the Anglo-Irish talks had in effect been a "nudging" of the Unionist by the British Government and had given rise to considerable apprehension within that community. Lord Gowrie said that in Northern Ireland there were two communities which had not intermarried for 300 years. The Government's present proposals were not liked by the SDLP but on the other hand they were seen by many unionists as selling them down

the river. Limited accommodations between the communities were the only way forward. The Government had made clear that there would be no devolution except on terms which would be acceptable to the minority community.

5. Mr Shannon conceded that few people in the United States took much interest in Northern Ireland affairs and emotional issues such as that of the plastic baton round aroused much more concern than arguments over devolution. The widely-publicised use of plastic bullets was used to rationalise support for NORAIID and the IRA. He asked what they could say in order to undermine this: could for example the group return to the United States and say that there was no discrimination against Catholics? Lord Gowrie said that for historical reasons there had at times been such discrimination but far from this being the policy of the United Kingdom Government efforts were continually being made, particularly since direct rule, with the aim of reversing it. On the issue of baton rounds he explained that our public order problem did not consist of large groups of demonstrators but rather small groups which, wittingly or unwittingly, sometimes acted as a screen behind which terrorists could shoot to kill soldiers or policemen. In these circumstances plastic baton rounds were better than lead bullets. If the use of plastic baton rounds was stopped there might be some short-term credit for the Government but it was almost certain that soldiers would subsequently be killed in the kind of incidents in which baton rounds were now used and would be forced to respond with lead bullets. There might be a danger of another Bloody Sunday incident. He noted that the previous week a soldier had been killed by pre-teenagers. Water cannon were not considered suitable for the sort of incidents which occurred in Northern Ireland but the Government and the security forces were looking at other alternatives. Mr Shannon said that he appreciated the practical problems involved but he wanted the British Government to be aware of the propaganda value in the United States of this issue. Mr Dougherty, who said that as a former military man himself he was also aware of these practical problems, maintained that in order to wean American/Irish opinion from NORAIID something positive needed to be done.

6. Lord Gowrie said that the growing co-operation between London and Dublin had been a positive step of this kind. He hoped very much that despite the present hiccup caused by among other things the Falklands dispute this co-operation could still be pursued. It was not, however, possible for a democratic government to order a million of its citizens to leave the country against their will.

7. Sir Ewart Bell said that radical measures had been taken in the fields of housing, health and social services in order to prevent discrimination. It might be said that the result was bureaucratic but it was effective in eliminating discrimination and being seen to do so. In the field of education the universities and Polytechnic were fully integrated; there was segregation at the primary and secondary level, in part because of housing patterns but primarily because the Catholic Church wished to run separate schools and they were given financial support by the State to do so. District Councils now provided only a few services; there had been allegations of discrimination on the part of certain councils but there was a considerable array of checks including the Fair Employment Agency, the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the ombudsman. Mr Shannon said that he had heard that Protestant extremists were not treated in the same way as their Catholic counterparts. Lord Gowrie said that he presumed that this referred to the fact that the UDA was not proscribed. He said that this did not mean that the UDA was regarded by the Government as an acceptable organisation and pointed out that the Provisional Sinn Fein were not proscribed either. Mr Buxton pointed out that it did not mean that the UDA was free to operate as it liked. Anyone who committed criminal acts was liable to prosecution and Andy Tyrrie and five other leaders of the UDA had recently been charged with serious offences. Several "Loyalist" paramilitary groups were proscribed.

8. Lord Gowrie emphasised that despite some political strains between the London and Dublin governments ordinary political links remained very close on everyday matters. In response to Mr Shannon's asking whether there was any joint economic planning, Dr Quigley referred to Kinsale gas, and the history of electricity inter-connection between north and south. He said that electricity generation had been planned on an all-Ireland basis but that paramilitary intervention

had prevented the potential for this being realised. Lord Gowrie said that there was now a tendency in the Republic to seek to settle Northern Ireland issues on the London-Dublin ^{exclusively} axis /: the British Government was firmly of the view that there would be no stability unless Northern Ireland interests were also involved.

8. Sir Ewart Bell recalled that he and Dr Quigley had run departments under the power-sharing Executive. There had then been a feeling within the Unionist community that Northern Ireland was moving too far towards reunification too fast. Their obstructive reaction then could be repeated if circumstances were seen to be similar and this formed part of the Government's dilemma. Dr Quigley noted that in the current recession Protestants had begun to suffer unemployment to a similar degree to the Catholic community. The Government's present political moves sought against this background to achieve political co-operation between the communities in practical areas of government.

9. Lord Gowrie referred to Dr Paisley's image in the United States as being useful to the British Government not only because he illustrated some of the difficulties we faced but also because he was identifiably a non-British element in Northern Ireland's problems. Part of our difficulties with the present Taoiseach stemmed from his apparent reluctance to recognise the Northern Ireland Protestants as part of the problem.

10. Mr Dougherty remarked that Seamus Mallon's recent visit had led in Philadelphia to certain labour leaders for the first time refusing to follow the lead of the local NORAIID group. He went on to ask what kind of American investment was Northern Ireland looking for. Dr Quigley answered that they fell into two categories: blue chip companies; and high technology and high value added industries, perhaps in the engineering sector, which could take full advantage of the the good educational resources within Northern Ireland. Mr Dougherty floated the idea of pressing within the House Armed Services Committee to designate Belfast as the home port of an American aircraft carrier group. This could lead to the circulation of an additional

FR.

\$100m to \$150m within the local economy. Dr Quigley added that the shipyard and the aircraft factory might also be able to contribute their facilities; and it was agreed that at first sight such a proposal would be very welcome. Mr Dougherty said that he would take the idea away for further thought.

11. Finally Lord Gowrie asked that the group remember what the Government's present proposals were: they set out guidelines for future progress and were very flexible. They were not liked by unionists and the minority could be assured that devolution could not happen without the consent of the parties who represented them.

12. The meeting ended at 6.30 after two hours.

G.D. Fergusson

G D FERGUSSON
PS/Lord Gowrie

4 June 1982