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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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Michael Alexander, Esq.,
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25 October 1979

Dear Michael

for [unclear]
26/X

LUNCH WITH THE US AMBASSADOR

I enclose a note of some of the main points discussed at a lunch which my Secretary of State had with the American Ambassador yesterday.

I am sending a copy of this letter to George Walden.

R.A. Harrington

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

c.c. PS/SofS (L&B)
PS/PUS(L&B)
Mr. Marshall
Mr. Hannigan
Mr. Moriarty
Mr. Burns
Mr. Buxton
Mr. Gee
Mr. Gilliland
Mr. Corbett

The Secretary of State had lunch with Mr. Kingman Brewster, the United States Ambassador, at the Embassy on 24 October. Mr. Ed Streater and I were also present - there were no other guests.

The Irish American Element in US Politics

The Ambassador acknowledged the formidable ignorance of some American politicians on the nature of the problems in Northern Ireland, but said that the British Government must expect this to be a noisy issue during the primary campaigns. He drew a sharp distinction between the primary campaigns and the main presidential campaign, however: the Irish issue was an important matter to candidates having Irish Americans amongst their electorate, but this issue was localised. It was certainly not a national issue, and would in his view not feature in the presidential campaign even if Kennedy were a candidate.

So far as the present US administration's stance on Northern Ireland was concerned, he thought the campaigns for the primary elections were now sufficiently well advanced for any prospects of a significant change in the administration's policy to be considerably lessened. (By implication, this appeared to refer to the prospects for any form of US financial aid in Northern Ireland. In particular, it was noticeable that the conversation was steered quickly away from this aspect of Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien's lecture of yesterday).

Arms for the RUC

The Ambassador believed that a political initiative by the British Government could be of considerable help in persuading the US Government to relax its position on arms for the RUC. He would welcome

any understanding of the American position which the Secretary of State might be able to show at questions on 25 October: it would on the other hand strengthen his position with his own administration if Mr. Paisley, in asking the question, were not similarly restrained. The Ambassador raised, and showed a persistent interest in, the question whether it would be possible to persuade Mr. Paisley to make a statement condemning protestant terrorism and parliamentary activities. Such a statement, though of much less significance than an initiative by the British Government, would be of considerable assistance to the US administration. The Secretary of State held out no prospect of Mr. Paisley making any such statement. Mr. Paisley did not claim the support of such organisations publicly, but he had established his position by occupying the extreme end of Ulster politics and he relied upon the support of such people.

A Political Initiative

The Secretary of State told the Ambassador that he would be making a statement in Parliament on 25 October, though its content was not mentioned. The Ambassador is making arrangements to attend question time and the statement in order to be in a position to report immediately to his Government. (In this connection there was some discussion of the terms on which journalists at the Ambassador's dinner for Congressmen Foley on 25 October might be expected to report. Mr. Streater will be making arrangements to make clear that the whole occasion will be on an off-the-record basis).

Visit of Mr. Lynch to the United States

The Ambassador asked whether his Government or that of the United Kingdom was in a stronger position to ask Mr. Lynch to emphasise the fact that the IRA represented a common threat to the Governments of the North and the South of Ireland. The Secretary of State suggested that, in view of the difficulties which Mr. Lynch was currently experiencing within his own party, such pressure would be most effective if it came from the United States but at the present stage was unlikely to be effective anyway. All agreed, however, that any statement by Mr. Lynch emphasising the common interest of both sides of the border and the common effort now being made as a result of the recent talks between the Government

of the Republic and of the United Kingdom would be most helpful both to the US Government and to the British Government.

Visit of the Prime Minister to the United States

The Ambassador said that he would hope to meet the Prime Minister before her impending visit to the United States to discuss the themes of her visit. He felt sure that Northern Ireland would feature in some degree. In this connection it would be very helpful to him and his Government if, in addition to the necessarily brief consultations between the Prime Minister and the Ambassador, the British Government would arrange for more informal preparation at official level between the Embassy, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Northern Ireland Office. The Secretary of State said that he would welcome such contacts so far as the Northern Ireland Office was concerned and would draw this point to the attention of his colleagues.

R. A. Harrington

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