

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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Visit of Vice-President Bush

Draft Steering Note

Objective: It is suggested that the Taoiseach and the Minister should seek to arouse the concern of the Vice-President about the alienation problem on the nationalist side with a view to securing:

- the active intervention of President Reagan with Mrs Thatcher over the coming months, and
- the creation of circumstances whereby the work of the Forum would in due course, if considered desirable, be supported by President Reagan.

Strategy: The scenario for Anglo-Irish relations now seems to be somewhat as follows:

- Oct./Nov. Anglo-Irish Summit
- Dec./Jan.(84) Forum Reports
- Apr./May Post-Forum Anglo-Irish Summit.

1. Our information is that President Reagan is already preparing for the next presidential campaign and is giving particular attention to various ethnic constituencies in the US, notably the Hispanic-American population and also the white "ethnic" (Irish, Italian and Polish working class) vote. We have been authoratively advised (by Kirk O'Donnell) that Reagan might well welcome an invitation to Ireland next year.
2. It is suggested that the President be invited to come here for St. Patrick's Day: this idea would probably appeal to his sense of political theatre. A visit by Reagan at that stage and before the Post-Forum Summit with Mrs Thatcher could be a useful lever in securing the serious attention of the British to the results of the Forum by having those results seen to be discussed seriously with the President of the US or, should those results be unsatisfactory, the visit would at least serve to highlight the necessity that the British be seen to be positive and active about Northern Ireland.

3. It is accordingly suggested that the Taoiseach and the Minister convey through the Vice President a particular invitation to the President to come here next St. Patrick's Day. The Taoiseach might like to indicate that he would propose to follow up with a telephone call to the President in perhaps a month's time on this theme (?).
  
4. It is also suggested that our side seek to arouse the concern of the Americans on the grounds of the serious level of alienation which has arisen on the nationalist side in Northern Ireland. A certain amount of foundation work was laid for this approach through a useful conversation between the American Ambassador and the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs on 7 July (see brief). Ambassador Dailey and his sympathetic counsellor, Mr Boyle, were both quite positive in their response to an approach which laid heavy stress on our concern at the present situation and our need to get the British to take the situation seriously. From subsequent conversations with both Dailey and Boyle, it is clear they reported in detail on our approach and that they encountered the usual State Department British-inspired intransigence. Dailey himself has stressed that the President is personally anxious to be helpful within the limits of the possible. It is suggested that the Taoiseach and the Minister, rather than stressing the fact that Sinn Féin made little or no gains in the recent election, should on the other hand emphasise the present serious level of support and the opportunities which this creates for subversion and indeed outside (Soviet) exploitation. The increasing leftward trend of the Sinn Féin leadership might be emphasised. It might be stated that the present situation of overt support for leaders who support violence would not have been expected three years ago and even in our own State, with high and rising levels of youth unemployment, constitutes a threatening situation, the seriousness of which the British, although generally sympathetic, have quite failed to confront. The Vice President might be asked to ensure that the British were made aware of the concern of the US at this unwelcome deterioration and of their concern that efforts be made to reverse the trend towards instability.
  
5. In recent days, the Irishness of Reagan was stressed to us by Mr O'Donnell. The Taoiseach and the Minister, in speaking to the Vice President, might state that we appreciate this (it would be

a useful corrective to the State Department restrictive briefing of Bush).

5. It is suggested that the Irish side outline the Government's approach to and hopes of the New Ireland Forum laying particular emphasis on our hope that the assessment by the Forum of the Unionist problem should be adequate and realistic and lay the basis for a more profitable dialogue in the future.
6. Irish-America. Appreciation of the President's great interest should be strongly expressed as a critical encouragement to constitutional politics in its desperate battle with the nihilism of Sinn Féin, especially within Northern Ireland.
7. Similar appreciation should be expressed of the leadership shown by Speaker O'Neill in the Democratic Party. It is suggested that the role of Senator Kennedy should not be stressed. Our information is that while Reagan and O'Neill disagree on many major issues in US policy they are united in their sense of Irishness and their concern to do the responsible thing for this country. We have requested that the Speaker should back with the President our request that a message be given to the British about the urgency of American concern that progress be seen to be made. It might be useful for the White House that on this issue some appreciation of American bipartisanship be expressed.
8. Similar appreciation might be conveyed in relation to the role of the Friends of Ireland and indeed the attitude shown by serious US media commentators.
9. Concern might be expressed about the continuing problem in the Irish-American community. Our side might state that this would become very much greater and indeed difficult to control were capital punishment to be reintroduced by London.
10. It is suggested that no specific policy objective should be envisaged for the Anglo-Irish framework during the conversation with the Americans. That should be reserved for the Post-Forum period and ideally should come to a head in a meeting with the President on St. Patrick's Day.

11. The attitude of the State Department to our efforts to create a positive US policy on Northern Ireland is well known. The main conversation on Northern Ireland might therefore take place in the absence of Civil Service aides (possibly a relatively junior note-taker on each side); The more intimate the conversation the more useful at this stage.

28 June 1983