

Memorandum from Denis Corboy to Louis Janz (17 November 1969)

Caption: On 17 November 1969, Denis Corboy, attaché in the European Communities' Dublin Information Centre, forwards to Louis Janz, Director of the European Communities' Press and Information Service, a summary of the parliamentary debates prompted in Ireland by that country's possible accession to the European Communities.

Source: Archives historiques des Communautés européennes, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. Edoardo Martino, EM. 2 visites de Hillery (1969-1970), EM 97.

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Publication date: 04/09/2012

Dublin, le 17 novembre 1969

Memorandum from Denis Corboy to Louis Janz (17 November 1969)

A M. Louis Janz, Directeur, Direction A.D.G.X.
De Denis Corboy
Objet: Foreign Affairs Debate in Dáil (Irish Parliament)
October 28, 29 and November 4.

The official report on the Foreign Affairs debate in the Dáil has just been published. There were three main subjects discussed — Irish policy in regard to Biafra, the raising of the Northern Ireland crisis at the United Nations and the application for EEC membership. I annex extracts from the more important speeches where they treat with the Irish application.

Dr. P. J. Hillery, Minister for External Affairs, said that every effort was being made to ensure the Irish Government's readiness for negotiations. For the Irish, the first objective in negotiations was that they should lead to simultaneous accession of Ireland with the other applicants. The new Foreign Minister said he wished to welcome publicly the Opinion of the Commission — "a valuable and constructive document". He drew attention to the references in the Opinion to the need to strengthen the Community in the context of enlargement and to the obligation which was imposed on the applicants to cooperate with measures aimed at this internal strengthening and development.

Mr. Gerard Sweetman (Opposition Fine Gael Spokesman on Foreign Affairs) criticised the handling of the EEC situation by the Government. He called for a White Paper on the implications of membership.

Sir Anthony Esmonde (Fine Gael Opposition) argued that the Irish should negotiate as far as possible in advance of the British. He warned against relying on the British Government for support during the negotiations.

Mr. Barry Desmond (Opposition Labour Party) suggested that the applicants should seek to have observers at the summit conference. He also called for a White Paper on EEC membership.

Dr. Garret FitzGerald (Opposition Fine Gael), in a speech which lasted four hours, examined the fundamental principles which should guide Irish foreign policy. In a remarkable contribution, which is certain to influence Irish thinking in this field for many years to come, he made a case for a foreign policy which would be both independent and European. He called for a more active role in European politics, in particular in regard to European security and the position of Europe in the world. The exploitation of Ireland by its large neighbour, Britain, could only be ended by both countries being members of a Community with strong institutions. In regard to Irish membership, he considers that there would be considerable advantages for agriculture and that the difficulties for industry could be resolved by adaptation. In regard to Northern Ireland, he argued that an eventual unification of the country would be helped by the surrender of sovereignty to European institutions and the implementation of the common agricultural policy on both sides of the Irish Border. Ireland had a unique role to play within the European Community and an important aspect of this would be to act as a bridge between the Community and the third world. It would be necessary to create in the enlarged Community "a sense of common Europeaness". Ideally the Community should aim at becoming an economic and political federation in which the cultural diversities of its member States would be encouraged and protected. It had to be democratic, and this demanded strong parliamentary institutions to control its public administration. The other characteristics of this Europe which he sighted are that it would be peace-loving not militaristic, orientated towards the development of the third world, and with a regional policy which would minimise the centralising economic forces. On the fundamental issue of the parliamentary control of the Community, the Irish could expect support from the British, the Scandinavians and the Dutch. Dr. FitzGerald asked all Irish parliamentarians to commit themselves to the direct election of the European Parliament and to the strengthening of the European institutions.

Mr. Michael O'Kennedy (Fianna Fáil Government Party) said that one of the primary functions of the

Community should be to aid the developing countries. The Community should establish closer contacts with Eastern Europe. As a preparation for membership Irish stagiaires should be trained in the Commission and other institutions.

Mr. Michael O'Leary (Opposition Labour Party) made an important speech which points to a major change in the policy of that Party. Up to now the Labour Party had been opposed to Irish membership and opposed to the Community itself on ideological grounds. They have now adopted a line which is nearer to that of Left-wing Socialists on the Continent. Mr. O'Leary said that his only misgiving about Irish entry was in regard to the preservation of industrial employment. The Government has not given sufficient information on the implications of membership. He criticised the parroting of platitudes about accepting the political implications of the Community. He said there was a tendency to replicate British attitudes. He called for an Irish policy on the German question. His Party now accepts the validity of the idea of a united Europe, politically independent of the USSR and the United States, which as a world power could look after its own affairs.

In reply to the debate, the Minister for External Affairs noted the degree of unanimity among all Parties for securing membership at the first available opportunity. He promised a policy statement and White Paper in the New Year, i.e. after conclusions could be drawn from the summit conference and the end of the transition period. An inter-departmental committee composed of officials is engaged in a study of the problems relating to Irish membership.

Dr. Hillery has told me that he is very satisfied with the Foreign Affairs Debate, particularly with the valuable contribution made by Dr. Garret FitzGerald. He is also encouraged by the indications of a change in policy by the Labour Party, a change of some significance which will make the task of informing the Irish public about the Community considerably easier.

[Signed] Denis Corboy