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An Unlikely Champion:

Congressman Mario Biaggi and the Beginnings of a Negotiated Settlement in Northern Ireland

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
The Department of History

By

Ronnie D. Johnson

B.A., Louisiana State University, 1987

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Abstract

In 1976, U.S. Congressman Mario Biaggi, D-NY, seized on Jimmy Carter's comments regarding human rights conditions in Northern Ireland. Biaggi, and several Irish/American groups, took these comments as an opening to challenge British policies in Northern Ireland. To aid this effort Biaggi in 1977 formed the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs, focusing on human rights in Northern Ireland. Their efforts ran up against long-established U.S./British diplomatic relations and faced strong opposition in U.S. and Irish political circles.

As the Northern Ireland debate unfolded during the Carter Administration, Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee increasingly aligned with pro-IRA forces and were in turn denounced as supporters of terrorists. This characterization misses the importance of their efforts to broaden the political dialogue to include paramilitary groups and in increasing attention to the human rights situation in Northern Ireland, both key early steps leading to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

An Unlikely Champion:

Congressman Mario Biaggi and the Beginnings of a

Negotiated Settlement in Northern Ireland

John Hume, the leader of the Northern Ireland Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP), stated the following in 1979:

> In recent years the influence of powerful American leaders of Irish extraction in Washington, notably Senator Edward Kennedy and House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill, has brought the issue [future of Northern Ireland] to a point where the Carter Administration has taken a position on Northern Ireland...The Irish question has become a legitimate and serious issue in the Atlantic relationship between London and Washington...The responsible interest of American leaders is welcome. Less welcome is the exploitation of the issue by a few less distinguished politicians.[1]

Foremost among the "less distinguished politicians" referenced by Mr. Hume, was Congressman Mario Biaggi (D-NY), an Italian-American representing the Bronx and a portion of Queens in New York City. Biaggi, a critic of British policy in Northern Ireland since his election to Congress in 1968, seized on President Carter's intent to make human rights a key tenet of U.S. foreign policy. In 1977, Biaggi led in the formation of the Congressional Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs. The intent of the committee was to focus attention on the human rights conditions in Northern Ireland via Congressional hearings and to expand the political dialogue to include the IRA and Sinn Fein. Biaggi's efforts though quickly ran afoul of powerful political forces in not only Britain and Ireland, but also at home. He was routinely characterized as a tool of the IRA and a mouthpiece for the terrorists. Such heated rhetoric, however, misses the importance of Biaggi and the committee's efforts in setting in motion events that would

contribute, in no small part, to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. This partial settlement halted "The Troubles," the term often used to describe the violence in Northern Ireland between 1966 and 1998. Biaggi took on the U.S., British, and Irish governments, challenging the "Special Relationship" and forcing not only a reassessment of U.S. foreign policy in regards to Northern Ireland, but also the British government's reassessment of the relevant sovereignty it exercised in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, Biaggi's effort to broaden the political dialogue to include all parties, in particular Sinn Fein and the Ulster paramilitary parties, though unsuccessful at the time, was a prelude to their eventual inclusion during the "Good Friday" peace process. Likewise, Biaggi's efforts helped define the role of human rights in U.S. foreign policy during the Carter Administration.

On October 26, 1976, Presidential Candidate Jimmy Carter met with a delegation from the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish National Caucus, two Irish/American groups strongly critical of British policies in Northern Ireland. Following the meeting Carter issued a statement:

> The Democratic National Convention plan [on Ireland] was written jointly by our own staff and Mayor Daley of Chicago to be sure that the world knows that the Democratic Party understands the special problems of Ireland and it is a mistake for our country's government to stand quiet on the struggle of the Irish for peace, for respect of human rights, and for unifying Ireland.[2]

The statement was quickly denounced by both the British and Irish Republic governments, seen by them as a clear interference in a matter of internal politics of those two countries and an incitement of American groups and individuals sympathetic to the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

Though such sentiments were popular in areas where Irish-Americans still existed as large, cohesive groups such as New York and Massachusetts, Carter's statement was indeed a major departure from American diplomatic precedence concerning Northern Ireland. Since the inclusion of the six northern counties into the United Kingdom in 1920, the American

government looked upon the years of civil war and continued unrest there as a British internal issue, being very careful to avoid any official statements concerning the matter. Carter's statement, though not official U.S. policy, was significant coming from a major political figure and potential U.S. President.

This abrupt departure from U.S. diplomatic precedence was to prove consistent with President Carter's focus on human rights as a key tenet of his administration's foreign policy. As Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Advisor, recalled: "The commitment to human rights reflected Carter's own religious beliefs, as well as his political acumen. He deeply believed in human rights..."[3] Human rights as an element of U.S. foreign policy were also consistent with the political spirit of the post-Vietnam and post-Watergate era. The conduct of American foreign policy raised questions in many quarters, none more so than the U.S. Congress.

On January 20, 1977, Jimmy Carter took office along with the new 95th Congress. The 95th Congress was soon to prove itself a more assertive group than many of its predecessors in the area of foreign policy. Gone were many of the Congressional leaders, both House and Senate. Departed from the House were key leaders such as Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma; Ways and Means Committee Chairman Wilbur Mills of Arkansas; Armed Services Committee Chairman F. Edward Hebert of Louisiana; Ray Madden, Chairman of the Rules Committee; and Louisiana Congressman Otto Passman of the powerful Subcommittee on Foreign Operations of the House Appropriations Committee.[4] Replacing them in the House was a much younger and more liberal group, foremost among them the new Speaker of the House, Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill of Massachusetts.

The Senate likewise saw the departure of many old hands: Lister Hill of Alabama, Sam Ervin of North Carolina, William Fulbright of Arkansas, Albert Gore, Sr. of Tennessee, Stuart

Symington of Missouri, and Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Senate Majority Leader for the past sixteen years.[5] Charles O. Jones, in his book The Trusteeship Presidency[6], noted that the new Congress was much more aggressive and unwilling to play only a passive role in the formulation and conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

The new faces in Congress brought with them a changed view of their institution's role in foreign policy. Congressman Lee Hamilton and congressional staff member Michael H. Van Dusen in a 1978 journal article[7], focused on the changes in congressional oversight and direct involvement of Congress. During the 1950s to the mid-1960s, foreign policy had been almost exclusively the purview of the President and the U.S. State Department they noted. However, they stated, "The national trauma over Vietnam ended this phase."[8] What followed was a phase of active involvement in foreign policy by both houses of Congress. One manifestation of this increased involvement was congressional concerns with human rights. Sandra Vogelgesang of the Council on Foreign Relations emphasized in a 1978 Foreign Affairs article that President Carter had not "discovered" human rights. But rather, "What Carter did find was an issue in cyclical upswing. Disenchantment with U.S. experience in Vietnam...had helped, together with the civil rights movements of the 1960's, to set the stage for emphasis on international human rights in the 1970s."[9]

The winds of change were not confined to America during this time, but were also at work in Ireland, albeit often more violently. In 1966, the year normally recognized as the beginning of the modern "Troubles," conditions for the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland were deplorable and about to explode. Barred from many jobs, only 4 percent of those earning $4,000 or more were Catholic.[10] Few jobs could be found by Catholics in the civil service; only 32 of 177 municipal workers in predominantly Catholic Derry were Catholic.[11] Some of the worst

inequities were in housing, as in County Fermanagh, were only 568 houses built since World War II went to Catholics, out of a total of 1,589 built.[12] The inequities in housing had profound political implications as well, allowing the gerrymandering of the ward system that insured the continuation of the fifty year long political domination by the Protestant controlled Northern Ireland Unionist Party.

By 1969, the long dormant IRA had begun to re-emerge as an alternative to Protestant domination. Its membership remained small and its efforts did not engender wide support in the Catholic community at that time. But as tensions continued to grow, the British took a fateful decision, the introduction of regular British Army forces into Northern Ireland. On August 14, 1969, a battalion of the Prince of Wales Regiment was committed to the Catholic Bogside region of Derry and the 1st Battalion of the Queens Regiment deployed to Belfast.

The introduction of British forces into Northern Ireland had profound effect. Since the 1920s the British had taken a detached approached to the region, governing from afar and leaving day to day administration to the prime minister of Northern Ireland and a local parliament. John Hume summed up the situation well, describing not only London's position concerning Northern Ireland, but Dublin's as well: "London, for its part, exercises a reluctant sovereignty in Northern Ireland, while Dublin maintains a somewhat reluctant claim to that sovereignty."[13] This tense but controlled state of violence remained the norm in Northern Ireland until 1971. In August of that year militant Protestants began a purge of Catholics from communities which the Catholic families had inhabited for decades and even centuries. The IRA and like-minded Catholics, commonly referred to as Republicans, responded with increased violence, often directing their actions against the British Army, killing four British soldiers and wounding twenty-nine more during that month.[14] In response the British re-introduced the policy of internment. "Internment

meant stepping outside the rule of law and abandoning legal procedures in favor of simply rounding up suspects and putting them behind bars without benefit of trial."[15]

"Operation Demetrius", launched on August 9, 1971, netted 340 suspected IRA members. Of those detained nearly all were later released, though some were submitted to "special experimental interrogations" prior to release. In the first six months of internment 2400 suspects were arrested with the vast majority being released later due to lack of evidence. Rather then stemming the violence, internment drastically increased it. Prior to "Operation Demetrius," thirty-one people had been killed that year in "The Troubles." By the end of the year that number had risen to 150.[16] Of all those detained via internment, not a single one was a Protestant. The Catholics of Northern Ireland responded by turning away from participation in public life, and some turned to the IRA.

In 1972 "The Troubles" reached the high-water mark of deaths, with almost 500 killed that year alone.[17] Fourteen of those would lose their lives on 30 January, "Bloody Sunday." On that day angry Catholics took to the streets of Derry in an illegal civil rights demonstration. In response a battalion of the Parachute Regiment, an elite British Army unit, confronted the marchers and opened fire on them. When the shooting stopped fourteen marchers were dead, and dozens more wounded. In response the Catholics of Northern Ireland withdrew further from public life, as some joined the ranks of the IRA. The British responded with the continuation of internment and other escalating security measures, responded to in turn by more IRA violence, a classical tit-for-tat relationship.

As the violence increased and the security measures became more severe, many outside of Northern Ireland began to take note. Among them was the New York Congressman Mario Biaggi.

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Mario Biaggi was born October 26, 1917 in New York City. From humble Italian-American beginnings, he joined the New York Police Department (NYPD) in 1942. Over the next twenty-three years Biaggi would distinguish himself as one of the most decorated New York policemen ever. He was wounded in the line of duty ten times. He shot fifteen people, two fatally, also in the line of duty. He received numerous awards, among them the NYPD "Revolver Award for Devotion to Law and Order." In 1965 the Italian government presented him its highest honor for a foreigner--the *Cavaliere of the Order of Merit.* His well-earned reputation as a tough, law and order warrior served him well as he moved from the NYPD to politics.

In 1968, Biaggi decided to enter politics, running as a Democrat for the 10th U.S. Congressional District, which included the Bronx and portions of Queens. He ran as a law and order candidate, denouncing black rioters around the country as "insurrectionist" and "subversive".[18] Such a message resonated in the heavily Italian-American middle class neighborhoods of the 10th District, an area plagued by high crime rates. Biaggi won election in 1968 and continued to pile up impressive victory margins in successive elections. Biaggi's election victory margins, however, were hardly due to Irish-Americans, who made up no more than 10% of the district's population.[19]

With such a small number of Irish-American constituents, one may well wonder what drew Biaggi to the issue of Northern Ireland. When accused by political opponents in 1972 of playing for the "green vote," Biaggi responded: "The Irish-American vote is non-existent in my constituency."[20] When queried about his knowledge of Northern Ireland affairs he stated, "A big Irish cop called Pat McMahon of the 24th Precinct [New York City] told me all about it in 1942 or 43."[21] The charges of human rights violations by police in Northern Ireland resonated with

Biaggi. As a former police officer, he understood the difference between strong law-enforcement and police brutality. An examination of Biaggi's early legislative initiatives provides some insight into his involvement with Northern Ireland as well, indicating his commitment to humanitarian issues. One of his first bills signed into law was a 1970 bill that established equal and adequate transportation facilities for elderly and handicapped citizens.[22] Other similar legislation included a Military Justice Bill[23] designed to assure military personnel due process of law in court martial proceedings, the Comprehensive Child Abuse Prevention Act[24], a Bill of Rights for Law Enforcement Officers[25], and numerous efforts to end discrimination against Italian-Americans and Soviet Jews. With such a propensity toward humanitarian and human rights issues, his own experiences as a police officer, and his common Catholic background, his involvement in the issue of Northern Ireland and human rights there is easier to understand.

During Biaggi's years in Congress he routinely went into the Congressional Record concerning human rights abuses in Northern Ireland. His statements were often based on newspaper articles, public statements made by various individuals, letters from victims of human rights abuses in Northern Ireland and their families, and no shortage of his own statements and viewpoints on the subject. A prime example can be found in the Congressional Record of October 21, 1971. Biaggi recounts a letter he received from an Irish citizen who was interned by the British, subjected to torture, held without appeal and confined in a prison ship in Belfast Lough. In Biaggi's opinion, "nothing could more soundly condemn the British Government for its continued denial of basic human rights in Northern Ireland."[26]

In an effort to acquire additional information, Biaggi in 1971 dispatched his oldest daughter Jacqueline and a member of his staff to Northern Ireland to conduct a fact- finding mission on the conditions there. Upon their return, Biaggi took to the floor of the House and read into the

record their account of "...the abuse of civil liberties perpetrated on a fearful populace by the British troops."[27] He went on to make two demands of the British government, first calling on them to end use of the Special Powers Act, which allowed for arrest without warrant, internment without trial, extraordinary search powers, and a ban on many public meetings and publications. Secondly, Biaggi called for an immediate and complete withdrawal of all British troops from Northern Ireland, a call he often echoed over the following years.

In an October 1, 1971 letter to his Congressional colleagues, Biaggi asked for their support in co-sponsoring his House Resolution 165, "...urging a plebiscite of the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to determine the question of reunification."[28] This was coupled with his plea to United Nations General Secretary U Thant to intervene in Northern Ireland in order to restore peace there.[29]

Following the events of Bloody Sunday in February, 1972, Biaggi's activities took on an even more direct and impassioned course. According to Biaggi, the events of Bloody Sunday significantly altered his involvement with Northern Ireland; "... it wasn't until the thirteen young folks were killed---murdered---in Derry that I got deeply involved."[30] Once more he dispatched his daughter to Northern Ireland where she attended a massive demonstration condemning British actions there. Biaggi in turn followed her visit with one of his own, attending a protest march in Newry, Northern Ireland, estimated at 50,000 participants. Upon his return from Newry, Biaggi recounted to the House: "The sight of British commandos with their black, pitch-smeared faces and carbines at the ready stood as a stark testimony to the reality of the situation. Here was a country at war."[31]

Biaggi's efforts during this period did not go unnoticed by the Irish-American community. In early 1975 Biaggi was approached by Father Sean McManus, a Redemptorist priest and national

director of the Irish National Caucus (INC), a pro-IRA lobby group headquartered in Washington, D.C., with branches in Boston, New York, and New Jersey. Biaggi's association with the INC would color all of his future efforts on behalf of Northern Ireland.

The INC began its lobbying efforts in 1974 with the immediate objectives of acquiring a lifting of the ban on U.S. visas for suspected IRA and Sinn Fein members and the holding of Congressional hearings on Northern Ireland. Among its membership were some of the most significant names in the Irish-American community, such as Mick Flannery, the founder of the Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAID), one of the main IRA support groups in the U.S. Other members included Jack Keane, president of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), the largest Irish-American organization in the U.S. and the sponsors of the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade, as well as Ted Gleason, a prominent and powerful trade-union leader.[32] It was the contention of many Irish, British and U.S. officials that the INC was merely a front for the IRA. These accusations were made credible in part by Father McManus himself. In a 1975 interview with British television, Father McManus admitted his support for the militant Provisional wing of the IRA; "I am on record for quite a long time now for supporting the Provisional IRA."[33]

Unable to succeed on its two main objectives, the INC looked to Mario Biaggi for much needed support. In April 1975 McManus arranged the first of what would be several trips by Biaggi to Northern Ireland to meet with IRA and Sinn Fein members, an abrupt departure from the established U.S. political practice of rejecting meetings with terrorist organizations. On April 30 Biaggi held a press conference in Dublin along with Sinn Fein president Ruairi O'Bradiagh, and two prominent IRA leaders, Joe Cahill and Seamus Loughran, as well as a leading INC member, Frederick Burns O'Brien. Not only did Biaggi call for Congressional hearings on the

civil conflict in Northern Ireland, but he went so far as to praise the IRA, giving it credit for having "...focused attention on the problem in the six counties"[34] of Northern Ireland.

Biaggi's press conference created an immediate firestorm in Dublin where his efforts were seen as aiding the IRA cause. Biaggi dismissed the Dublin government's views. "I was gathering facts. If anyone thinks that a member of the Congress of the United States of America condones violence, he is very foolish."[35] Such exchanges would mark much of the future debate between Biaggi and his gathering opposition.

Biaggi's press conference, coupled with Jimmy Carter's speech to the INC and AOH, focused the Dublin government on the threat at hand. What followed was a major effort by Dublin to woo President Carter away from the influence of the INC and AOH. In this effort Dublin enlisted the support of four powerful Irish-American politicians; House Speaker Thomas "Tip" O'Neill (D-MA), Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) and the Democratic New York Governor Hugh Carey, known collectively as the Big Four. Their efforts were by and large successful. On August 30, 1977, President Carter issued a statement on Northern Ireland that would define his administration's position from that point forward. Where in 1976 he had decried the failure of the U.S. government to take part in helping solve the situation in Northern Ireland, his 1977 position was much more restrained and neutral and in keeping with the long-standing practice of previous U.S. administrations. His statement noted

> U.S. Government policy on the Northern Ireland issue has long been one of impartiality, and that is how it will remain. We support the establishment of a form of government in Northern Ireland which will command wide-spread acceptance throughout both parts of the community. However, we have no intention of telling the parties how this might be achieved. The only permanent solution will come from the people who live there. There are no solutions that outsiders can impose.[36]

Disappointed by President Carter's muted position, the INC and AOH turned once more to Mario Biaggi. On August 31, 1977, the day after Carter's Northern Ireland statement, AOH President Jack Keane contacted Biaggi, asking him to establish and serve as chairman of a Congressional ad hoc committee that would further the INC and AOH cause. Biaggi readily accepted, and on September 28, 1977, the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs was formed.

Biaggi had a cause, human rights in Northern Ireland, the requisite conditions, an activist Congress, and now a forum, the Ad Hoc Committee. What followed was a struggle that helped define the extent and limitations of human rights as an element in U.S. foreign policy, while at the same time generated a major reassessment of the political future of Northern Ireland.

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At the opening press conference of the Ad Hoc Committee, three main objectives were outlined: 1) to gain full Congressional hearings on the entire Irish Question; 2) to gain a reversal of the current State Department visa policies which arbitrarily prevented Irish political figures from entering the U.S. to speak to Irish Americans; and 3) to meet with the President in order to give him a broader perspective on Ireland.[37] The efforts to gain full Congressional hearings were, by and large, efforts to bring into the open the issue of human rights abuses perpetrated by British army and Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in Northern Ireland, most notably imprisonment without trial and the use of torture to gain confessions. The human rights abuses of the RUC would also serve as the basis for one of Biaggi's and the committee's major successes- the embargo of arms sales to the RUC. The issue of visas was directly related to Biaggi's efforts to gain inclusion of Republican forces, most notably the IRA and Sinn Fein, into the diplomatic

efforts concerning the future of Northern Ireland, thus elevating them to become a partner in negotiations.

An examination of the Carter Administration's human rights policies and statements articulated a clear position on human rights violations. At a Town Hall meeting in Clinton, Massachusetts, in March 1977, President Carter commented on the issue of prisoners: "I feel deeply that when people are put in prison without trial and tortured and deprived of basic human rights that the President of the United States ought to have a right to express displeasure and do something about it..."[38] This viewpoint was codified in a National Security Council Presidential Decision (PD/NSC-30) on February 17, 1978, which stated that

> It shall be the objective of the U.S. human rights policy to reduce worldwide governmental violations of the integrity of the person (e.g. torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; arbitrary arrest or imprisonment; lengthy detention without trial and assassination...[39]

On the issue of arms sales, the Carter Administration policies were clearly evident in PD/NSC-13, issued on May 13, 1977. Dealing specifically with the issue of security assistance, of which arms sales were a key part, PD/NSC-13 stated

> The United States will give continued emphasis to formulating and conducting our security assistance programs in a manner which will promote and advance respect for human rights in recipient countries.[40]

PD/NSC-30 was even more proscriptive concerning assistance to police and defense forces, where once again arms sales were central. The directive stated

> The U.S. shall not, other than in exceptional circumstances, take any action which would result in material or financial support to the police, civil law enforcement authorities, or others performing internal security functions of governments engaged in serious violations of human rights.[41]

PD/NSC-30 also advocated the enhancement of "civil and political liberties (e.g. freedom of speech, of religion, of assembly, of movement and of the press..."[42] The issue of freedom of

movement was of particular note concerning IRA and Sinn Fein members. Administration statements denouncing the government of Czechoslovakia for arresting and harassing Czech dissidents, as well as strong criticism of the Rhodesian government for preventing political negotiations concerning the future of that country, further clarified the Administration's viewpoint on political participation by parties outside the established governmental structures. Likewise, the Carter Administration had placed pressure on "friendly tyrants"[43] such as Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, linking an improvement in human rights there to continued U.S. aid. This resonated strongly with Biaggi and his desire to gain IRA and Sinn Fein participation in the political process in Northern Ireland.

Though Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee's goals and objectives seemed to dovetail with the Carter Administration's policies on human rights and expanded political participation, other factors greatly complicated Biaggi's and the Ad Hoc Committee's ability to enact them, foremost the policies and objectives of London and Dublin. As previously noted, London's policy toward Northern Ireland had shifted from one of absentee-landlord to direct military involvement. Encased within, but at times at odds with London's position, was that of the Ulster Protestants. The overarching goal of the British and the Ulster Protestants was to protect the interest of the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland.

The policies and objectives of Dublin were more ambiguous. What seemed to serve as Dublin's guiding principle was opposition to anything even remotely connected with the IRA and Sinn Fein, without offering an alternative course to militant republicanism. This was particularly true of Dublin's relations with the Irish-American community. As the renowned author of Irish history, Tim Pat Coogan, noted: "...for most of the century, Dublin had a peculiarly cack-handed method of approaching this potential wellspring of support [Irish-

Americans]...the Irish-American lobby, if indeed one could properly describe it as a lobby, was minuscule."[44] Coogan goes on to point out when Dublin did focus on Irish-America, it was largely ill-defined and usually ineffective in garnering support for Dublin's positions. "Dublin exercised its influence in such a diffused, negative fashion that a great deal of energy was dissipated..."[45]

The good intentions of Biaggi's committee and those of the Carter Administration would thus collide with the multi-faceted realities of Northern Ireland.

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The years 1976 and 1977 were bloody ones in Northern Ireland with 308 and 116 sectarian related deaths during those years.[46] This continued violence followed the failure of the Sunningdale Agreement[47], an effort at power sharing between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. One of the victims of the failure of Sunningdale was Northern Ireland Secretary Merlyn Rees, a member of British Prime Minister James Callaghan's cabinet. With his departure as secretary, departing with him were British efforts to gain political cooperation among the warring factions in Northern Ireland. Rees was replaced by Roy Mason, an ex-miner and former defense minister who saw increased security measures as the answer to Northern Ireland's problems.

Mason's new security plan hinged on two major initiatives "criminalization" and "Ulsterization." The former was based on the decision to discontinue the Special Category status conferred on those imprisoned for terrorist activities during "The Troubles". Those imprisoned under Special Category status received considerable privileges- contact with authorities only through their own officers, liberal contact with friends and family, exemption from prison work details, and the privilege of wearing civilian clothing vice prison uniforms. The real significance

of the Special Category though, was the identification of the detainees as "political" prisoners, as opposed to common criminals. Mason's "criminalization" effort ended this distinction. Thenceforth, IRA and other paramilitary detainees would be denied the acknowledgement of any political motivations for their actions and would be treated as common criminals.

Mason also made extensive use of what became commonly referred to as the "Diplock Courts".[48] This process was little different in fact from the practice of internment which had officially ended in 1975. Under the "Diplock Courts" system the defendant faced a single judge rather then a jury. The underlying reason for this practice was the intimidation of jurors and witnesses by those sympathetic to the defendants. However, without witnesses and often scarce forensic evidence, the authorities became more and more reliant on defendant confessions alone to gain convictions. This reliance on confession spawned an entire system of confession extractions known as the "Castlereagh system".[49] It was primarily at the Castlereagh RUC interrogation center in east Belfast where extreme interrogation measures, such as beatings and hours-long hostile interrogations, were directed against suspected terrorist in order to extract confessions from them. In a November 1977 report to Mason, thirty solicitors who often appeared before the "Diplock Courts" stated that, "Ill treatment of suspects by police officers, with the object of gaining confessions, is now common practice, and...most often, but not always takes place at Castlereagh RUC station and other police stations, throughout Northern Ireland."[50] The clamp-down constituted the principle human rights violations of the period in Northern Ireland.

Mason's "Ulsterization" initiative was another major contributor to human rights violations. Patterned on the U.S. "Vietnamization" program, "Ulsterization" focused on replacing British soldiers in Northern Ireland with the Royal Ulster Constabulary policemen, just as South

Vietnamese soldiers replaced U.S. soldiers during the later stages of the Vietnam War. The consequence of this action was to replace normally disciplined, professional British soldiers with often less disciplined and less professional Ulstermen, many of whom were personally affected by the "The Troubles" and nursed grievances with the Republicans.

The dual strategy of "criminalization" and "Ulsterization" quickly swelled the population of Maze Prison, previously called Long Kesh Prison, the main detention center used to house IRA and other paramilitary prisoners. Located outside Belfast, Maze Prison included the infamous H-Block, a specially designed section of the prison where mainly IRA prisoners were housed, separated from the regular prison population. The physical layout of the H-Block allowed for constant surveillance of the prisoners and segregation into two-man cells. It was in the H-Block of Maze Prison that many of the most publicized human rights violations occurred.

Mario Biaggi joined a chorus of others who routinely denounced these British and RUC practices. In a May 14, 1977 press release Biaggi cataloged many of these violations. As he noted, Britain in February 1977 had admitted to the use of "five torture techniques against prisoners in Northern Ireland. These included: a) hooding prisoners; b) harassing them with noise; c) putting prisoners on diets of only bread and water; d) depriving prisoners of sleep; and e) making prisoners lean against walls for long periods, off-balance, with arms outstretched."[51]

In June of 1978, Biaggi joined Senator Kennedy and Governor Carey in denouncing the British government for human rights violations reported by Amnesty International. From November 28 to December 6, 1977, Amnesty International conducted an investigation of alleged human rights violations by the RUC. Of the 3,444 terrorist suspects arrested by the RUC during 1977, Amnesty International concluded that 78 of them had been subjected to maltreatment and thus with "...sufficient frequency to warrant the establishment of a public inquiry to investigate

it." [52] In light of this, Biaggi hyperbolically concluded; "The fact is Northern Ireland under the direct rule of Great Britain has one of the worst human rights records of any nation in the world."[53]

On February 8, 1979 the U.S. State Department issued their "Report on Human Rights Practices in Countries Receiving U.S. Aid," a requirement recently placed on it by the Congress. The report recounted a series of documented and admitted cases of human rights violations by British and RUC forces in Northern Ireland. However, the report detailed efforts by the British to deal with many of the violations and concluded that "Britain's strong commitment to the improvement of human rights practices at home and throughout the world has been made clear by government leaders."[54] Such a conclusion fit with what Biaggi saw as the Carter Administration's refusal to confront Britain on the issue of human rights.

On June 19, 1978 Biaggi's frustration with President Carter grew and he went on a collision course with the White House.

> Jimmy Cater has preached the gospel of human rights since the early days of his campaign. It won him the support of certain groups in this nation. It got him attention and praise and prompted great hope. Yet with Ireland the policy has been the height of hypocrisy. To the Irish community, Jimmy Carter preaches selective morality.[55]

Biaggi repeated this sentiment during a November 24, 1978 speech at the INC Dinner in New York City. "It is the height of selective morality for our Administration which so loudly preaches human rights around the world to remain silent about Northern Ireland."[56]

Unable to attain full Congressional hearings and frustrated with the Administration, Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee's efforts were long on rhetoric but short on actual accomplishments. One significant accomplish did come though in July 1979 with the blocking of a State Department sale of arms to the RUC. Purported by the State Department as aid to a country

fighting terrorism, the RUC was scheduled to receive 3,500 handguns to outfit its officers. In blocking the sale Biaggi cited Clause 502(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act, which prohibited the sale of weapons to groups that violate human rights. In Biaggi's view, the arms sale was a

> ...manifestation of the interest of your State Department in dealing with Ireland. They profess to be neutral when dealing with the Irish issue. They pontificate about repression of human rights in our foreign policy but remain silent on the Northern Ireland Question. Then to add fuel to the fire, they approve a major arms sale to the Police Authorities who have been cited by several respectable international organizations including Amnesty International...for serious human rights violations. It is the height of selective morality and makes the State Department susceptible to criticism if not ridicule.[57]

The actions and inactions of President Carter and his Administration which Biaggi characterized as hypocrisy, marked in many ways the limits in utilizing higher human rights standards in U.S. foreign policy during the Carter Administration. Joshua Muravchik in his book, The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy, asked several questions concerning human rights priorities in U.S. foreign policy. One of the questions he asked concerned the issue of consistency. "Should U.S. human rights policy aspire to respond in a similar manner or with similar severity to similar human rights violations irrespective of the identity of the offending government?"[58] A second question he posed dealt with punitive measures: "Should the United States manipulate its economic aid, security assistance, credits and financing, trade, or other forms of resources transfers in the hope of coercing other governments into showing more respect for their subject's rights?"[59] These two questions were highly germane to the issue of U.S.-British relations.

In answering these two questions in regard to Great Britain, the "Special Relationship" and the Cold War were overriding factors. The "Special Relationship" between the U.S. and Great Britain was born of desperation following the collapse of France in 1940. Great Britain, faced with the specter of facing Nazi Germany alone, turned to the U.S. for material assistance and

possible entry into the war alongside her. The relationship developed during the war between the two countries and their leaders, Roosevelt and Churchill, survived the war due in large part to the efforts of Churchill and the post-war challenges presented by the Soviet Union. In his famous "Iron Curtain" speech delivered at Fulton, Missouri on March 5, 1946, Churchill first referenced the "Special Relationship," calling for a continuation of the Anglo-American alliance. The "Special Relationship" was further strengthened by a common language, British financial investments in the U.S., and the sharing of scientific/technical information during World War II.

The "Special Relationship" was not without its difficulties, however. American unease with British colonial policies was one major point of friction. For the British, the decline of their world power and prestige and the inverse of U.S. fortunes also stressed the relationship. In spite of these and other frictions, the "Special Relationship" continued strong with the onset of the Cold War. As David Watt states in The Special Relationship,

> The sense of overall common purpose and mutual need which the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations shared with their British counterparts made it possible, until the end of the 1950's at any rate, for politicians and officials in Britain and the United States to converse with an openness and regularity that was exclusive and on a different level from the normal cordiality of allies.[60]

Though this closeness was to wane during the turbulent 1960's, cooperation remained strong in military and intelligence matters, both vital in confronting the Soviet Union.

Henry Kissinger said of the "Special Relationship":

> It was an extraordinary relationship because it rested on no legal claim; it was formalized by no document; it was carried forward by succeeding British governments as if no alternative were conceivable. Britain's influence was great because it never insisted on it; the 'special relationship' demonstrated the value of intangibles.[61]

President Carter's approach to the "Special Relationship" differed only in intensity, not substance, as he established a warm if not close relationship with the Labor British Prime

Minister James Callaghan. A much closer relationship developed between Carter's Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, and Callaghan's Foreign Secretary, David Owen. Thus committed to the continuation of the "Special Relationship", Carter was unwilling to risk it by taking the type of punitive actions called for by Biaggi.

Once more to cite PD/NSC-30:

> The [human rights] policy shall be applied globally, but with due consideration to the cultural, political, and historical characteristics of each nation and to other fundamental U.S. interest with respect to the nation in question.[62]

With respect to human rights violations by the British and RUC in Northern Ireland, the facts, as stated by Biaggi and the committee, were irrefutable. Human rights violations had and continued to occur there. With Britain in Northern Ireland, as was the case in many other countries, it was not a question of "guilt", but rather the willingness of the U.S. to confront the British.[63] In the case of Britain, the Carter Administration was not willing to antagonize one of its staunchest and most important allies. Realpolitik trumped human rights in Northern Ireland.

On June 10, 1980, in what would be the final months of the Carter Administration, Biaggi read into the Congressional Record a speech he had given a few weeks prior at the AOH's annual conference. In his speech, a certain level of disappointment is evident over the failure to achieve more with regards to Northern Ireland. "In our [Ad Hoc Committee] almost 33 month history, we have succeeded in one very broad, but critically important area—we have raised the Irish Question from a position of relative obscurity to one which now enjoys and commands national and international attention."[64] Even Biaggi's staunchest critics would have to concede that much.

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The formation of Biaggi's Ad Hoc Committee in 1977 coincided with the process of political change in Northern Ireland. The failure of the Sunningdale power-sharing initiative in Northern Ireland had profound consequences for the security situation there. Likewise, the failure of the effort led to major political changes.

The Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 was an agreement between the British and Irish governments and the principle political parties of Northern Ireland, Unionist and Catholic alike. The mainstay of the agreement was the Council of Ireland, which served as a forum for north-south cooperation, while retaining Northern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom. The failure of the agreement was due in large part to the unwillingness of the new British Labor Government under James Callaghan, which took power in 1974, to stand up to radical Ulster Unionist forces led by Ian Paisley, Ernest Baird, and Harry West. Content only with the continuation of Protestant majority rule in Northern Ireland, which Sunningdale did not insure, they called for strikes across the country. The British Labor government caved to the radical Unionist pressure and refused to take action to end the strike. In a fit of despair, Brian Faulkner, chief minister of the Council of Ireland, resigned, hastening the end of the Sunningdale process.

The failure of Sunningdale made clear the veto power of the Unionist over any political settlement the Unionist opposed. Coupled with the ability of the Catholic minority to block a return to simple majority rule, political stalemate ensued in Northern Ireland. One of the first political leaders with the courage and foresight to find a way out of the political stalemate was John Hume, the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) leader. He sought to do so by internationalizing the Northern Ireland situation, turning the debate from power-sharing, to a broader Anglo-Irish debate. Hume summarized his view of the issue in his 1979 Foreign Affairs article, "The Irish Question: A British Problem." Hume stated:

> I believe, as the title of this paper suggests, that the perennial British view of the problem as "their quarrel" [the Irish] and not "ours" [the British] is fundamentally wrong: Britain is, in fact, included in the quarrel as a central protagonist, and must be centrally involved in the solution.[65]

Not only did Hume look to broaden the debate to include Britain, but he also looked to bring the United States into the debate by engaging powerful Irish-American politicians. The impetus to do so came largely as an effort to counter the Biaggi-INC connection. Hume's target audience in the American political arena was quite different from the INC audience, however. His efforts, coupled with those of Dublin and the Irish diplomatic corps, focused on the powerful Irish-American political quartet known as the Big Four--Kennedy, Moynihan, Carey, and O'Neill. Thus the struggle for Irish-American political support broke down in two distinct camps. The Hume-Dublin camp aligned with the Big Four. The other camp, comprised of the INC, IRA and other republican groups, aligned with Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee. Tim Pat Coogan called the former group the "golden circle" of the American and Irish political corps. He characterized the later group as "...the Irish of the worlds of the country associations, the Gaelic League, Irish dancing and Gaelic football."[66] It was to this Irish ethnic irredentist camp that the INC and Biaggi provided an American voice.

Another element of the changing political landscape was within the IRA. In 1977 Gerry Adams was released from prison and, along with Martin McGuinness, began to take control of the IRA. Adams and McGuinness represented the younger IRA members made up primarily of northerners, as opposed to the aging southern IRA leadership of Ruairi O'Bradaigh and Daithi O'Connaill. In the view of the northern leaders, the southern leadership had made a mistake in declaring a ceasefire during the mid-1970s. During the lull in the fighting, the IRA lost many of its members and ceded the initiative in Northern Ireland to the British and RUC. Adams, as the chief theorist and spokesman for the new IRA leadership, moved to dispel the notion that an IRA

victory was in the offing. Rather than a near-term victory, Adams envisioned a "long war" of attrition with the British, whom he saw as the main enemy, rather then the Unionists. If Britain could be worn down, it would withdraw, and the Unionist front would soon collapse, so went the Adams theory. However, Adams saw the "long war" as not only a military struggle, but also a political struggle, and thus moved to strengthen Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA.[67] In Adams' view: "There is now a realization in republican circles that armed struggle on its own is inadequate and that non-armed forms of political struggle are at least as important."[68]

Thus by 1977 many of the political groups and individuals that would determine the future of Northern Ireland were in place. Over the next two years some of these groups and individuals would become embroiled in the political wrangling of the two primary Irish-American political groups, The Big Four and Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee. The outcome of that struggle would be significant in the years that followed.

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One of the most publicized and consequential events in the political debate emanated from comments made in 1978 by the Irish Prime Minister (Taoiseach) Jack Lynch. In January of that year Lynch gave an interview with Irish radio in which he was highly critical of British actions in Northern Ireland. Many took his comments as a call for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, creating a furor among the British and Unionist establishments. Biaggi quickly picked up on the flap over Lynch's comments and on January 24, 1978, wrote to Lynch commending him on his rebuke of Britain and his call for British withdrawal, a call being made regularly by Biaggi himself. Biaggi went on to say:

> The Ad Hoc Committee is most interested in seeing that this declaration of intent become a reality. I would be most grateful for your comments on the overall prospects for peace in Ireland, as well as your assessment of the efforts which the Ad Hoc Committee might undertake to contribute to the goal of peace.[69]

Prime Minister Lynch, prodded by the Irish diplomatic delegation in Washington, responded not as Biaggi had hoped. Rather than reach out to Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee, Lynch launched a counter-offensive to discredit Biaggi and to deny that he had called for a British withdrawal. What followed was a running battle in the U.S., British and Irish press, with the exaggerated dialogue hindering negotiations in Northern Ireland. Biaggi came under criticism in the press as a dupe of the IRA, while Lynch's foray into character assassination called both his propriety and veracity into question.

The Biaggi-Lynch tiff resulted in a net increase in the membership of Biaggi's Ad Hoc Committee from 93 members to 125. Biaggi claimed: "It was the best thing that ever happened to us because... what the prime minister did with that single thrust was he made us [Ad Hoc Committee] international."[70]

As Biaggi gained support among many, particularly in the Irish-American community, the incident soured relations between that same group and the Irish diplomatic community in Washington, furthering complicating the efforts of all to find a resolution to the Irish Question. Lynch continued the feud when Biaggi visited Ireland later that year. Lynch refused to meet with Biaggi and accused him in an open letter of associating "...with supporters of violence which had no democratic mandate from the Irish people."[71] Lynch, along with Ireland's ambassador to the U.S. Sean Donlon, kept up a steady drumbeat against Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee over the next year. When Charles Haughey replaced Lynch as Prime Minister in 1979, he attempted to terminate the feud by replacing Donlon, but yielded to pressure from Senator Kennedy and House Speaker O'Neill to keep him on. In a 1985 speech in New York, Haughey looked back on the incident and reflected:

> There has been a major failure of communication in recent decades.

> Conflicting and confusing signals have been coming from Ireland to the Irish in America. There has been no clear message on policy; no specifically enunciated national objective behind which all right-thinking Americans could rally and to which they could give their unambiguous up-front support. More often than not the official message was negative, condemnatory and critical...Americans who wished only to offer genuine support and encouragement were met with suspicion, rebuff and disapproval...[72]

This was a very perceptive post-mortem analysis of this senseless intra-Irish feud.

A second major effort by Biaggi to influence the political situation in Northern Ireland was his sponsoring of a peace forum. Jack Holland, the noted Irish historian, said of Biaggi's effort to do so: "It was probably one of the most harebrained and grandiose [efforts] he ever undertook."[73] The idea for the peace forum, according to Biaggi, came once again from the INC and AOH. In an October 14, 1978 news release, Biaggi stated:

> The Ad Hoc Committee, if it were to sponsor a peace forum, would do so as an entirely neutral body. We would provide the opportunity for groups to meet outside of Ireland to present and listen to various peace proposals. The forum would be limited to those groups with specific peace proposals which include a cessation of violence and the means to implement their proposal.[74]

In November 1978 Biaggi traveled to Ireland to meet with various political parties and paramilitary organizations to garner their support for the peace forum to be held in May 1979 in Washington, D.C. According to notes of the meeting taken by Bob Blancato,[75] Biaggi's legislative assistant, support for the peace forum was strongest among the Protestant paramilitary organizations and some of the smaller political organizations. He further notes, however, that the main Unionist parties to include the SDLP were not on board "...due to concern with meeting with paramilitary groups." The same went for the Provos (Provisional IRA), "...due to inclusion of non-violence declaration and lack of British presence."

Undeterred by the lack of interest among the main Unionist political parties and the IRA, Biaggi pushed forward with planning, scheduling the beginning of the forum for May 14, 1979. Biaggi stated that the Ad Hoc Committee would invite "...a complete cross section of political parties and organizations, labor, church and peace groups as well as representatives of the British and Irish governments."[76]

As May approached, however, it became clear the peace forum lacked support from many of the key players. The decision was made to postpone the forum until September. As that month approached, the continued opposition of London insured that the IRA too would not participate. Once again the forum was put off, never to be revived by the Ad Hoc Committee. The idea of a diplomatic roundtable of all constituents in Ireland thus unceremoniously evaporated.

Though Biaggi's peace forum never materialized, the effort to hold a conference had some very important consequences. A casualty of the failed peace forum effort was Father McManus and the INC. He and the INC were roundly criticized by the IRA for pushing the forum even though London had refused to participate. In the view of the IRA, any conference that did not include London added to the perception that the situation in Northern Ireland could be settled short of ending British rule there, a concept anathema to Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. From that point forward INC influence with the IRA was non-existent, and Father McManus ended his public support for the organization. With its linkage with the IRA ended, the INC became a non-factor in future efforts regarding Northern Ireland.

Biaggi's failed peace forum effort also had a significant effect among the Big Four. Due to Biaggi's efforts at least, he gained much credit and admiration among the Irish-American community, particularly in New York. The same could not be said of Governor Carey, whose image in the Irish-American community paled in comparison with Biaggi's. Faced with a tough

re-election bid in 1979, Carey turned to Biaggi for support. In an effort to gain that support, Carey began to stray from the Big Four script as he "...called upon the United States to encourage Britain to plan conscientiously now for what seems inevitable to most observers—a future in which the island of Ireland will be governed only by the Irish."[77] He went even further on April 21, 1979 when he called for economic sanctions to be imposed on Britain for human rights violations in Northern Ireland and for its failure to find a political solution in Northern Ireland.

On December 5, 1979 another member of the Big Four, Senator Moynihan, traveled to Northern Ireland to meet with Roy Mason and David Owen, the British Foreign Secretary. Upon his return to the U.S. Moynihan exclaimed: "I came away absolutely dazed; he [Mason] had no intention of doing anything about Northern Ireland except keeping the British there...There is no political will to settle."[78]

Carey's and Moynihan's departures came in the wake of an earlier one by Senator Kennedy. In June, 1978 he had joined Biaggi in condemning the RUC and urged the British government to take "all possible steps to investigate the latest serious charges of police brutality in Northern Ireland."[79]

Jack Holland noted in the *New York Times*; "...the militant Irish-Americans have been ecstatic over this change in emphasis among the Big Four...Now the wheel has come full circle. 'At long last they are moving in our direction', said Biaggi last week."[80]

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In January, 1981, the Carter Administration ended its awkward four years of government-by-faith. With its passing, so too did the prominent role of human rights in U.S. foreign policy. The Cold War and the Middle East would continue to insure the relegation of Northern Ireland to a

lower-tiered U.S. foreign policy priority, even while the violence continued there largely unabated.

As Carter passed from the political scene, Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee continued on their efforts, albeit on a much smaller stage and with a less attentive audience. Biaggi's political career came to an ignoble ending on August 5, 1988 when he resigned from Congress following his conviction on multiple charges in two separate trials.[81] The Ad Hoc Committee continues on today in relative obscurity.

So what then is the legacy of Mario Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee during the Carter Administration? Is it one of failure as evidenced by the inability to gain full Congressional hearings on Northern Ireland and the failure of the peace forum effort?

The evidence suggests otherwise. Biaggi and the committee helped insure that the human rights violations perpetrated by one of America's chief allies did not go unnoticed in spite of the efforts of powerful political forces at home and abroad to obscure. Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee saw the wisdom in bringing all the players to the table to talk, including the paramilitary forces implicated in many of the atrocities committed in Northern Ireland, terrorist or not. Biaggi knew that ultimately the IRA and the Protestant paramilitary forces had to be a part of any political settlement. Biaggi and the committee displayed the courage to take on the political elite of the United States, Great Britain, and the Irish Republic and in the end, if not win them over, at least forced them to reappraise their unyielding commitment to the status quo in Northern Ireland.

In November 1985 British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government and Irish Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald signed the Ango-Irish Agreement, a historic step along the eventual road to peace. For the first time London permitted Dublin a voice in the affairs of Northern Ireland. Under the agreement Dublin put forth proposals for government ministers and

the make up of public bodies in Northern Ireland and contributed to an intergovernmental conference designed to resolve differences between the various parties. The agreement also gave Dublin a role in the regulating of security forces and prison administration in Northern Ireland, a major step in ending many of the human rights violations that Biaggi and the Ad Hoc Committee had railed against.

By 1993 Thatcher had been replaced by Conservative John Major and FitzGerald by Albert Reynolds. In December of that year the two took another step toward peace, signing the Downing Street Declaration. The Declaration was a pledge of cooperation between London and Dublin with the goals of finding peace, establishing stability and reaching reconciliation by way of agreement between all parties in Northern Ireland. Both governments stated that they would accept the will of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland, irregardless of the outcome. It was from this declaration that the Framework Document was published in February 1995. This document served as the framework in which all-parties negotiations which Biaggi had envisioned would eventually take place.

In the following years other Biaggi objectives would be realized as well. Biaggi's effort to obtain visas for Sinn Fein and IRA members was realized in January 1994 when Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams was granted a U.S. visa allowing him to spend two days in New York. This was followed in March 1995 by Adams' reception by President Clinton at the White House. Adams's U.S. reception was coupled with a secret six-year long ongoing dialogue between himself and John Hume, the SDLP leader. By May 1995 the momentum toward finding a political solution to "The Troubles" lead to the first meeting in twenty-three years between British ministers and Sinn Fein representatives. Though cease-fires were announced by the IRA and Unionist paramilitaries, they did not hold. In spite of the continued violence, the search for a

political solution continued. In the words of former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, President Clinton's emissary to the Northern Ireland peace process:

> It was the fear, the anxiety, which gnawed away at every soul. The highly publicized and emotional funeral had become a regular event in Northern Ireland. The vast majority of people had had enough of that. They were sick of it. They wanted change.[82]

The Mitchell Commission, launched in January 1996, sought to build on the strong desire for change. The negotiations took on increased effort when in May 1997 Tony Blair was elected British Prime Minister, replacing years of Conservative government with a new Labor government. Backed by a majority in Parliament never available to Prime Minister John Major, Blair took bold steps to move the peace process forward, actions complemented by former President Clinton's direct involvement. Both leaders, unconstrained by many of the Cold War demands that necessitated maintenance of the international security status quo, were willing to embrace major changes in Northern Ireland.

What turned out to be one of Blair's most significant changes was his appointment of Majorie "Mo" Mowlam as his Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. When at one point the negotiations bogged down because of Unionist terror actions, she took the bold step of going to Maze Prison and speaking directly with Unionist prisoners detained there. Credited with restarting the negotiations, her actions were in keeping with earlier visits to the same prison by Biaggi.

In September 1997 another Biaggi objective was achieved when Sinn Fein joined the peace negotiations. Though later suspended due to IRA violence, the party returned to the talks and continued on toward the eventual settlement, which was reached on Good Friday, April 10, 1998. Senator Mitchell summarized the Good Friday Agreement.

> The agreement creates new institutions: a Northern Ireland Assembly, to restore to the people the fundamental democratic right to govern themselves; and a North/South Council, to encourage cooperation and joint action for

> mutual benefit. It deals fairly with such sensitive issues as prisoners, policing, and decommissioning.[83]

Much of the credit for this agreement has rightfully gone to U.S. President Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahren, SDLP leader John Hume, United Unionist Party (UUP) leader David Trimble, Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams and Senator Mitchell. But the long and bloody road to the Good Friday Agreement was paved by many others, heroes and villains alike, many forgotten or never known. Such should not be the fate of Congressman Mario Biaggi. Whatever one's opinion of Biaggi's actions on behalf of Northern Ireland, he is due some credit. His actions there were part of the grand mosaic that culminated in the Good Friday Accord.

If Biaggi ever read Leon Uris' great novel of Ireland, Trinity, he would likely have agreed with the author when he said, "No crime a man commits on behalf of his freedom can be as great as the crimes committed by those who deny his freedom."[84]

Notes

[1] John Hume, "The Irish Question: A British Problem," Foreign Affairs, vol. 58, no. 2 (Winter 1979/80): 312.

[2] Sean Cronin, Washington's Irish Policy 1916-1986: Independence, Partition, Neutrality (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1987), 312.

[3] Joshua Muravchik, The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986), 6.

[4] Charles O. Jones, The Trusteeship Presidency: Jimmy Carter and the United States Congress (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 51.

[5] Ibid., 52.

[6] Ibid., 60-61.

[7] Lee H. Hamilton and Michael H. Van Dusen, "Foreign Policy and the Democratic Process: Making the Separation of Powers Work," Foreign Affairs, vol. 57, no.1 (Fall 1978): 17.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Sandra Vogelgesang, "What Price Principle?-US Policy on Human Rights," Foreign Affairs, vol. 56, no. 4 (July 1978): 820.

[10] Jack Holland, Hope Against History: The Course of Conflict in Northern Ireland (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), 8.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 9.

[13] Hume, Foreign Affairs, 302.

[14] Denis O'Hearn, Nothing But an Unfinished Song: Bobby Sands, the Irish Hunger Striker Who Ignited a Generation (New York: Nation Books, 2006), 15.

[15] Dennis McKittrick and David McVea, Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2002), 67.

[16] Ibid., 69.

[17] Ibid., 76.

[18] Jack Holland, The American Connection: U.S. Guns, Money and Influence in Northern Ireland (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1999), 118.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 119.

[22] Biography of Congressman Mario Biaggi, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, Mario Biaggi Papers [hereinafter cited as MBP], Bronx Historical Society, New York, New York. Biaggi's papers are largely uncataloged. All documents referenced herein can be located in four large scrapbooks which Biaggi constructed. All documents included in the scrapbooks are related to his endeavors concerning Northern Ireland. The assistance of Peter Derrick, Ph.D., Archivist and Editor, at The Bronx Historical Society was invaluable in researching Biaggi's papers.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Congressional Record [hereinafter cited as CR] (21 October 1971), 37433.

[27] CR, (20 October 1971), 37110.

[28] Mario Biaggi Letter to Colleagues reference H.R. 165, 01 October 1971, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Holland, The American Connection, 119.

[31] CR, (23 February 1973), 5111.

[32] Holland, The American Connection, 117.

[33] Bernard Weinraub, "Lobby Linked to IRA Contends it is Gaining Congressional Support," Special to the New York Times 21 Sept. 1979: 1-2.

[34] Tim Pat Coogan, The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal and the Search for Peace (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 410.

[35] Holland, The American Connection, 121.

[36] Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Statement by President Carter on Northern Ireland," Public Information Series, (Washington, D.C., 30 August 1977), 2.

[37] Biaggi's Message to Ancient Order of Hibernians, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[38] Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle: Memories of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981 (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985), 125.

[39] U.S., President, "Human Rights," President Jimmy Carter's Presidential Directive/NSC-30 [hereinafter cited as PD/NSC-30] 17 February 1978 <www.jimmycarterlibrary.org> , last accessed on 10 March 2007.

[40] U.S., President, "Conventional Arms Transfer Policy," President Jimmy Carter's Presidential Directive/NSC-13, 13 May 1977 <www.jimmycarterlibrary.org>, last accessed on 10 March 2007.

[41] PD/NSC-30.

[42] Ibid.

[43] For a fuller accounting of the Carter Administration's dealings with the Somoza Regime and Nicaragua see Staci E. Williams, "Making Policy with a Friendly Tyrant: The Carter Administration's Struggle with the U.S. House of Representatives over Human Rights and U.S. Security Assistance to Nicaragua." MA thesis. University of New Orleans, 1996.

[44] Tim Pat Coogan, Ireland in 20th Century (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 411.

[45] Ibid., 413.

[46] McKittrick and McVea, Making Sense of the Troubles, 122.

[47] Ibid., 95-97.

[48] Coogan, The Troubles, 261.

[49] McKittrick and McVea, Making Sense of the Troubles, 124.

[50] Coogan, Ireland in the 20th Century, 584.

[51] Mario Biaggi News Release, 14 May 1977, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[52] Department of State, Report to Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and House Committee on Foreign Affairs, "Report on Human Rights Practices in Countries Receiving U.S. Aid," 96th Cong., 1st sess., 08 February 1979, 504.

[53] "Biaggi, Kennedy Call for N.I. Probe," Irish Echo [New York] 17 Jun. 1978, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[54] Department of State, "Report on Human Rights Practices in Countries Receiving U.S. Aid," 509.

[55] CR, (19 June 1978), 18192.

[56] Remarks at the Irish National Caucus Dinner in New York City on 24 November 1978, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[57] "Furore in Congress: Biaggi Hits State Department Action on Dispatching Arms to N. Ireland Police Authority," Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[58] Muravchik, The Uncertain Crusade, xx.

[59] Ibid.

[60] William Roger Louis and Hedley Bull, eds. The Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations Since 1945 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 5.

[61] ibid, p. 86.

[62] PD/NSC-30.

[63] Muravchik, The Uncertain Crusade, 116.

[64] CR, (10 June 1980), 13937-13938.

[65] Hume, Foreign Affairs, 301-302.

[66] Coogan, The Troubles, 413.

[67] In his 2003 memoir A Further Shore: Ireland's Long Road to Peace (New York: Random House, 2003), Gerry Adams vehemently contends that Sinn Fein is not the political wing of the IRA, but rather a political organization that shares some of the IRA's goals and objectives. This is a view rejected by most observers of Northern Ireland including all intelligence services.

[68] McKittrick and McVae, Making Sense of the Troubles, 128.

[69] Holland, The American Connection, 131.

[70] Ibid.,133.

[71] "Lynch Flies into U.S. Row", Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[72] Coogan, The Troubles, 413.

[73] Holland, The American Connection, 140.

[74] Mario Biaggi News Release announcing trip to Ireland, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[75] Memorandum from Bob Blancato to Mario Biaggi reference Ireland trip, 30 November 1978, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[76] "Biaggi to Convene Irish Peace Panel," Schenectady Gazette, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[77] Kevin M. Cahill and Governor Hugh L. Carey, "Our Role in Ireland's Tragedy," Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[78] Jack Holland, "The Big Four Turn Round," Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[79] "Biaggi, Kennedy Call for N.I. Probe, Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[80] Holland, "The Big Four Turn Round," Biaggi Scrapbook on Northern Ireland, MBP.

[81] In 1987 Biaggi was found guilty of accepting illegal gratuity and obstructing justice for accepting free vacations from Brooklyn Democratic leader, Mead Esposito, in exchange for using his influence on behalf of an Esposito client. He was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and fined $500,000. The following year Biaggi was convicted on fifteen of sixteen counts of extorting payoffs from executives of the Wedtech corporation, a defense contract scandal that extended to U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese. Biaggi received an additional eight year sentence. On August 5, 1988 Biaggi resigned from Congress.

[82] George J. Mitchell, Making Peace: The behind-the-scenes story of the negotiations that culminated in the signing of the Northern Irleand Peace Accord told by the American Senator who served as independent chairman of talks (Berkely: University of California Press, 1999), 174.

[83] Ibid., 181.

[84] Leon Uris, Trinity (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), 466.

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Vita

Ronnie D. Johnson was born on July 9, 1957 in Bastrop, Louisiana. He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from Louisiana State University in 1987, a Master of Arts Degree in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College in 2002, and a Master of Arts Degree in History from the University of New Orleans in May, 2007. He has served over thirty years in the United States military, beginning his service as an enlisted member in the United States Navy in 1975 and has been a commissioned officer in the United States Army since 1979. He continues to serve and holds the rank of Colonel. COL Johnson has been married to the former Pamela Fae Walker for the past twenty-eight years and has two daughters and four grand-children.