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Landing Rights in Dublin: Relations between Ireland and the United States 1945–72

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ABSTRACT

On 4 April 1947, the Irish Free State and the United States of America signed the Convention on International Civil Aviation, which was formulated in Chicago on 7 December 1944 and ratified on 5 March 1947. This specialised agency of the United Nations coordinates and regulates international air travel. Thirty years later, the two governments fell into a power struggle over American attempts to gain direct access for their airlines to Dublin Airport. Using recently declassified government documents and extensive research in newspaper archives, this article will offer analysis of the issue of landing rights in Dublin and how it challenged the governments of the United States and Ireland on both domestic and international fronts.

INTRODUCTION

Existing literature on the relationship between the United States of America and the Republic of Ireland, or its forerunner, the Irish Free State, has either focused on the establishment of the independent Irish state following partition, or on the role of groups in the United States in the Northern Ireland conflict.¹ The specifics of the foreign relations of the United States as relevant to the Republic of Ireland have often been overlooked in the literature, as noted by Lynch: ‘until 1993, American policy towards the island of Ireland was constructed to sustain the Anglo-American strategic partnership and, by default, relegated Ireland and Northern Ireland to areas of only intermittent significance.’² State papers emphasise the generally cordial relationship that the

¹Bernadette Whelan, *United States foreign policy and Ireland: from empire to independence 1913–1929* (Dublin, 2006); David Sim, *A union forever: the Irish Question and U.S. foreign relations in the Victorian Age* (Ithaca, NY, 2013); Joseph E. Thompson, *American policy and Northern Ireland: a saga of peacebuilding* (Westport, CT, 2001); Timothy J. Lynch, *Turf war: the Clinton administration and Northern Ireland* (Aldershot, 2004); Andrew Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster conflict 1968–1995* (Belfast, 1995); Adrian Guelke, ‘The United States, Irish Americans and the Northern Ireland peace process’, *International Affairs* (1996), 521–36.

²Lynch, *Turf war*, 7.

United States and Ireland have enjoyed since the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, though Irish neutrality during the second world war was of great concern to the US and existing literature has analysed the complicated nature of the relationship during this period.³ Henry Kissinger described the relationship as ‘warm and non-partisan...we have a sympathetic interest in Ireland’s extensive involvement in world affairs’.⁴ Despite these sentiments, however, the relationship was seriously challenged through three presidential administrations over Irish reluctance to allow United States-based airlines to land at Dublin airport, as the Irish government attempted to preserve the monopoly that state-owned Aer Lingus maintained over transatlantic flights in and out of the Irish capital. This article will analyse the development of the issue, from the establishment of transatlantic air travel in the 1930s through to the arrival of the first American flight into Dublin airport in 1974, and will offer insight into the relationship between Ireland and the United States over successive administrations through the context of a significant economic disagreement.

EARLY TRANSATLANTIC FLIGHTS

In the late 1930s, transatlantic air travel predominantly took the form of flying boats. As the most westerly country on the eastern Atlantic seaboard, Ireland was the logical stopping point for such long-distance trips and it was announced in late 1935 that a flying boat terminal would be constructed at Foynes on the southern side of the Shannon Estuary, close to the city of Limerick.⁵ Foynes was selected over other western sites because of the distinctiveness of the Shannon River, making the area easily identifiable from the air in an era of relatively unsophisticated navigation technology.⁶ There also happened to be, in the surrounding vicinity, ‘vast tracts of land, some of which, it is contemplated, may be used for landing grounds for aircraft’.⁷

The Air Navigation and Transport Bill (1936) passed its final stage in August of that year, following the establishment of Aer Lingus, the national airline in April.⁸ Work on a new airport, scheduled to begin the following month, was held up as landowners and the government struggled to reach an agreement over

³Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library (hereafter LBJ Library), Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963–69, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Box 195, Memo from George Springsteen meeting with the Irish Prime Minister, Mr. John M. Lynch, 8 June 1968. Paul Loftus has written on the topic, see ‘The politics of cordiality: continuity and change in Irish-American diplomacy during the Johnson presidency, 1963–9’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs* (20) (2009), 143–66; see also Paul Bew (ed.), *A Yankee in de Valera’s Ireland: the memoir of David Gray* (Dublin, 2012). Troy Davis has also written extensively on the topic, see *Dublin’s American policy: Irish-American diplomatic relations, 1945–1952* (Washington, D.C., 1998); ‘Diplomacy as propaganda: the appointment of T.A. Smiddy as Irish Free State minister to the United States’, *Eire-Ireland* (31) (Fall/Winter 1996), 117–29. See also Alan Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations 1899–1921* (London, 1969); Donald Akenson, *The United States and Ireland* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973); Sean Cronin, *Washington’s Irish policy 1916–1986: independence, partition, neutrality* (Dublin, 1987); or Joseph Lee and Marion Casey (eds), *Making the Irish American: history and heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York, 2006).

⁴Richard Nixon Presidential Library (hereafter Nixon Library), Nixon Presidential Materials, National Security Council Files, President’s Trip Files, Box 469, Memorandum for the president from Henry Kissinger.

⁵‘Air port for Ireland’, *The Irish Times*, 16 December 1935.

⁶‘Transatlantic air scheme’, *The Irish Times*, 17 December 1935. Other possible sites included Cobh and Galway, see ‘Air port for Ireland’, *The Irish Times*, 16 December 1935.

⁷‘Air port for Ireland’, *The Irish Times*, 16 December 1935.

⁸Irish Statute Book, Air Navigation and Transport Act (1936), available at: <http://www.irish-statutebook.ie/1936/en/act/pub/0040/print.html> (20 April 2015).

compensation.⁹ Aer Lingus would later move its Dublin base to the north side of the city, at Collinstown, in 1940.¹⁰

Construction on what became known as Shannon airport, at Rineanna, on the northern side of the estuary, was well underway in April 1937 when the government founded Aer Rianta Teoranta, the air transport company that would represent Irish interests in air services connecting Ireland with other countries.¹¹ The airport was completed in 1942, and the runways were extended in 1945 to allow larger aircraft, capable of transatlantic travel, to land. In early 1945 an agreement was reached between the governments of Ireland and the United States decreeing that

all eastbound air traffic from the United States to Ireland and beyond, shall stop at the Shannon airport as first European port of call, and all west-bound traffic on the same route shall stop at the Shannon airport.¹²

The Foynes site handled over 1,400 aircraft and 15,000 passengers between August 1942 and July 1943.¹³ In 1944, *The Irish Times* noted that ‘experts predict that ultimately Foynes (or Rineanna) will be the most important link in travel between America and Europe’.¹⁴ Pan American Airlines (PanAm) had inaugurated a service to Foynes in 1939 and, by August 1945, had conducted seventeen round trips to Europe, carrying 362 passengers.¹⁵ On Sunday, 16 September 1945, the airline landed a four-engined Douglas Skymaster, an airplane built to carry 42 passengers, at nearby Rineanna.¹⁶

A nine-and-a-half-hour trip from Gander Airport in Newfoundland had seen the Douglas aircraft make the first transatlantic flight by a commercial land plane. *The Irish Times* described it as ‘the first shot in the battle for air supremacy over the most important route in the world—North America to Europe’. Captain Harold Gray, the Operations Manager for the Atlantic Division of PanAm, noted that ‘Rineanna is right out in front in the preparation of international airports...it justifies the foresight of the Government of Eire’. The company also announced plans to land much larger Lockheed Constellation aircraft at the airport within ninety days; these were aircraft capable of carrying 100 to 200 passengers. The Lockheed Constellation was in high demand at the time, with orders for some \$40-million worth of aircraft for commercial flying placed by a variety of companies in New York.¹⁷

Just over a week earlier, Thomas Wilson, the chairman of Trans-continental and Western Airways (TWA) had visited the Foynes and Rineanna sites before travelling on to Dublin to establish contact with the Department of Industry and Commerce. TWA would use the latter site as a stopping point on its route from Newfoundland to Paris.¹⁸ That the Rineanna site was seen as a suitable stopping point, rather than a destination, became a significant issue.

⁹Free State airport’, *The Irish Times*, 30 September 1936.

¹⁰Aer Lingus, Company Profile, ‘History’, Corporate Aer Lingus, available at: <http://corporate.aerlingus.com/companyprofile/history/index.html> (10 April 2015).

¹¹New £500,000 air company’, *The Irish Times*, 7 April 1937.

¹²Air agreements approved by Dáil’, *The Irish Times*, 20 April 1945.

¹³Foynes is busiest air junction’, *The Irish Times*, 9 November 1943.

¹⁴Foynes to have world’s first free airport’, *The Irish Times*, 12 October 1944.

¹⁵New air service to Eire’, *The Irish Times*, 8 September 1945.

¹⁶Pan-American opens “battle” for Atlantic traffic’, *The Irish Times*, 17 September 1945.

¹⁷Pan-American opens “battle” for Atlantic traffic’, *The Irish Times*, 17 September 1945.

¹⁸New air service to Eire’, *The Irish Times*, 8 September 1945.

As the air travel industry developed, controversy developed over the administration of Shannon airport. In 1950, solicitor Denis Greene suggested that a board of individuals rather than the government should administer Shannon airport. Greene referred to a report that indicated that American air-charter companies sought licenses to operate cargo services to Europe via Shannon and were informed by US officials that no airline could guarantee Shannon any specific amount of business thanks to a fear of Irish authorities increasing rates at Shannon in the event of significant cargo arrivals.¹⁹ Then, in 1951, PanAm submitted proposals to Seán Lemass, then Minister for Industry and Commerce, for a national festival to extend the tourist season. They planned to target the 20 million Irish-Americans who were believed to have strong ties to Ireland.²⁰ In 1956 John A. Costello became the first taoiseach—the first of many—to spend St Patrick’s Day in the United States.

Around this time, international travel was a particularly profitable market for Aer Lingus, which reported in 1959 that £3 million of its earnings came from abroad.²¹ The Irish tourism development agency, now called Fáilte Ireland, noted in 1960 that some 69,000 visitors came from North America, estimating that 62,000 were from the United States.²²

LANDING IN DUBLIN

Shannon was critical to our transatlantic routes just after World War II when the Agreement was negotiated, and it was necessary to give the Irish access to three US cities as part of that trade. But Shannon has become far less valuable to us while New York, Boston and Chicago are extremely profitable for the Irish.²³

In 1961, after a meeting of the Travel Industry Advisory Council in Limerick, concern was noted that airlines were pressing for transatlantic traffic rights in Dublin. At that meeting, Limerick-based travel agencies and car-hire companies voiced concern over the possibility of increasing North American tourist traffic by bringing flights into Dublin rather than Shannon. At the time, Aer Lingus had no plans to stop using Shannon for all its transatlantic flights, and the inability of Dublin airport to receive the larger and heavier planes suitable for transatlantic flights made the debate somewhat moot.²⁴ It did, however, emphasise concern over the desire of international tourists to visit south-west Ireland rather than Dublin. With Dublin airport reportedly readying itself to handle a million passengers, with extended runways and newly installed high-intensity

¹⁹Shannon had recently increased landing charges, see ‘Control of Shannon Airport criticised’, *The Irish Times*, 22 August 1950. There was some hope among US airlines that crowds of Irish-Americans would visit Ireland as part of a pilgrimage to Rome in the 1950 Holy Year, see Mary E. Daly, ‘Nationalism, sentiment, and economics: relations between Ireland and Irish America in the postwar years’, *Eire-Ireland* (37) (1/2 Spring/Summer) (2002), 75–91: 78.

²⁰Daly, ‘Nationalism, sentiment, and economics’, 79.

²¹‘Aer Lingus will earn £3,000,000 from abroad’, *The Irish Times*, 27 February 1959.

²²Correspondence from Fáilte Ireland, 17 March 2015.

²³Memorandum for Kissinger from Theodore Eliot, Department of State, Background of US-Irish Aviation Relations 20/11/1971, NSC Files, Presidential Correspondence 1969–1974, Box 756, Nixon Library.

²⁴‘No demand to overfly Shannon’, *The Irish Times*, 31 January 1961. The issue of aviation was covered by *The Irish Times* air correspondent throughout the 1960s and 1970s, though other newspapers also offered detailed analysis, the *Times* was the only to have a dedicated correspondent.

approach landing equipment to assist pilots in poor visibility, Shannon airport faced an existential challenge.²⁵

The significance of Shannon airport to the Limerick-area economy was clear from the earliest days of American plans to fly into Dublin. Alderman G.E. ‘Ted’ Russell, T.D. for Limerick, said that if airlines were permitted to fly directly to Dublin instead of Shannon ‘it would sound the death-knell of Shannon as a great trans-Atlantic air base’. He added that the ‘main factor in the advancement of the city of Limerick had been the development of Shannon as an international airport, and, more recently, as an industrial centre’.²⁶ In November 1961, Irish and US officials met in Dublin to discuss the Air Transport Agreement, with the US government seeking both rights for PanAm and TWA to land at Dublin as well as onward rights for the airlines to then carry traffic via Dublin to Britain and Europe.²⁷ Aer Lingus general manager J.F. Dempsey described the issue as ‘a David and Goliath affair’.²⁸

By 1964, PanAm, Trans World Airlines and Trans-Canada Airlines all sought to obtain landing rights for Dublin. British European, Sabena and BKS had all been permitted access to Dublin the previous decade. Liam Boyd, a district sales manager for TWA, argued that ‘not only would it not hurt Aer Lingus but it would help them by increasing overall traffic to Ireland. Traffic from the U.S. to Ireland cannot increase without additional services and these can be provided by us at no cost to the Irish taxpayer.’ In his view, Dublin would help them meet the requirements of US tourists who had Ireland as one of their seven most popular destinations. He also added that:

in view of the double landing and service charges and in view of the short distance between Shannon and Dublin it is uneconomic to serve both on the same flight from an operational point of view, but we would continue to do so by agreement with the Irish Government eastbound and until such time as the main runway at Dublin is lengthened we would be obliged to stop at Shannon for operational reasons westbound.²⁹

Con McGovern of PanAm emphasised that Americans wanted to visit Dublin and that Dublin now had suitable accommodation for them upon arrival.³⁰ Jack Horan of Trans-Canada Airlines considered that it had been a mistake to establish two trans-Atlantic airports in Ireland.³¹

In April 1965, Raymond Guest was appointed as ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Ireland. Upon his arrival he claimed that he would not intervene in the landing-rights issue, stating that ‘airlines are not my business’.³² That quickly changed, however, with the ambassador commenting in late June that the potential for the promotion of greater tourism was inhibited by ‘the denial of American flag airline rights in Dublin’. He claimed that 90 percent of American visitors to Europe bypassed Dublin because it ‘is not a gateway city to Europe.’ This comment was a direct reference to the secondary issue of American airlines seeking onward rights from Dublin in addition to the right to land there in the first place.

²⁵ ‘Airport plans for 1,000,000 passengers a year’, *The Irish Times*, 13 April 1960.

²⁶ ‘U.S. airline will fly to Dublin’, *The Irish Times*, 13 June 1962.

²⁷ ‘U.S. airline will fly to Dublin’, *The Irish Times*, 13 June 1962.

²⁸ ‘No agreement on landing rights’, *Irish Press*, 31 January 1962.

²⁹ ‘Flying into the nation’s capital’, *The Irish Times*, 28 January 1964 noted that Dublin airport, at the time, lacked a 10,000 foot runway.

³⁰ ‘Flying into the nation’s capital’, *The Irish Times*, 28 January 1964.

³¹ ‘Flying into the nation’s capital’, *The Irish Times*, 28 January 1964.

³² ‘New American ambassador arrives’, *The Irish Times*, 27 April 1965.

Guest stated ‘this is not the way to build a strong tourist trade in an age when service is a major economic factor, especially in competitive tourism.’³³ The problem of the distance between the ‘gateway’ of Shannon airport and the destination city of Dublin had re-emerged. Guest continued:

aside from the fact that this is an inequitable agreement—for Irish Airlines has landing rights in three major American cities, while U.S. airlines can only land 125 miles from Ireland’s single major city—we cannot honestly concur in an economic argument which holds that an airline is more important than a nationwide tourist industry.³⁴

In June 1965, following Guest’s speech, the Government Information Bureau responded that it would meet with the US authorities to discuss the landing-rights situation.³⁵ It was quickly the Irish position that limited concessions might be granted to the Americans.³⁶ Convincing local politicians of the merits of these concessions proved much more difficult.

Allowing major American airlines to land at Dublin airport, and particularly the consequences for Shannon airport of such allowances, met with serious resistance from politicians in the area. On 9 September 1965 during a speech in Limerick, Minister for Health and T.D. for Limerick East Donogh O’Malley pledged that the government would deny American airlines direct flights to Dublin. Apparently with the blessing of Taoiseach Seán Lemass, O’Malley stated ‘the Government has not agreed—and never will agree—to the by-passing or overflying of Shannon Airport now or at any time in the future, as long as Fianna Fáil remains the Government of this country.’³⁷

Lemass noted that no formal consultations had taken place since the end of 1961, but the US government had recently requested talks under the Air Transport Agreement.³⁸ These began in November 1965. *The Irish Times* predicted ‘a strong line’ on the part of the Irish, and the *Irish Press* questioned the benefits to tourism in Ireland if rights were provided to US airlines.³⁹ Statistics for 1964 and 1965 suggest that the revenue generated by airlines in the United States had increased during this period.⁴⁰ October 1965 saw 9,003 enplanements and 5,794,200 passenger miles flown; figures consistent with the upward trend in air travel for 1965 when compared with the previous year.⁴¹ The American requests were refused, much to the relief of spokesmen at Shannon airport.⁴² The following year, by way of compromise and following a request from the Irish government, Aer Lingus introduced a morning service from Dublin to

³³‘New American ambassador arrives’, *The Irish Times*, 30 June 1965, ‘Policy change on US landing rights here?’, *Irish Independent*, 30 June 1965.

³⁴‘New American ambassador arrives’, *The Irish Times*, 30 June 1965.

³⁵‘New American ambassador arrives’, *The Irish Times*, 30 June 1965.

³⁶‘Irish-U.S. air talks expected: limited concessions?’, *The Irish Times*, 1 July 1965.

³⁷‘O’Malley puzzles American airlines’, *The Irish Times*, 15 September 1965.

³⁸‘Talks on airport landing rights’, *The Irish Times*, 21 October 1965 and ‘Air talks with US next month’, *Irish Press*, 21 October 1965.

³⁹The US was also pressing other states for increased access to their airports, see ‘Tough Irish line expected in airways talks’, *The Irish Times*, 30 October 1965 and ‘Airport landing rights’, *Irish Press*, 22 October 1965.

⁴⁰Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Historical Air Traffic Data Monthly: Year 1964, available at: http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/sites/rita.dot.gov.bts/files/subject_areas/airline_information/air_carrier_traffic_statistics/airtraffic/monthly/1964.html (20 April 2015).

⁴¹Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Historical Air Traffic Data Monthly: Year 1965, available at http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/sites/rita.dot.gov.bts/files/subject_areas/airline_information/air_carrier_traffic_statistics/airtraffic/monthly/1965.html (20 April 2015).

⁴²‘Decision welcomed at Shannon’, *Irish Press*, 11 December 1965.

Shannon, which *The Irish Times* claimed was welcomed by the US airlines.⁴³ The introduction of this service offered passengers arriving in Shannon the opportunity to travel on to Dublin by air, although it was at this stage five years since the initial request by the US to open Dublin airport to their airlines. It also meant that all arriving passengers in Shannon would still have to use Irish transport—either Aer Lingus or a form of ground transportation—to reach Dublin.

In March 1966 Lemass spoke at Limerick, stating that the American proposals ‘could have no adverse effect at all on Shannon’, adding that ‘as a last resort, the Americans would go into Dublin Airport provided they stop at Shannon’.⁴⁴ The following month, a ‘stormy’ public meeting in Limerick saw pleas made to the taoiseach to resist US pressure to allow landing rights in Dublin to a US airline. This included a resolution from Councillor Frank Leddin, the mayor of Limerick, and P.J. O’Sullivan commented in the *Limerick Leader* that the government allowing an American airline to fly into Dublin would be political suicide.⁴⁵

Alderman Stephen Coughlan was concerned about the evasiveness of both the taoiseach and Donogh O’Malley’s assurances about Shannon:

it was clearly evident that if one of the big U.S. airlines was given the right to fly into Dublin, the other would undoubtedly leave Shannon Airport as it would be unable to compete there on a competitive basis.⁴⁶

Even indirect flights into Dublin, he said, would cause wholesale unemployment in the south-west. Implicit in these statements was the fact that the economy of the Limerick area was heavily dependent on American tourists being forced to de-plane in Shannon.

In late 1966 and early 1967, the United States government moved ahead with its plans for a US airline to land in Dublin and made the decision to single out an airline that it would propose to the Irish government as the sole U.S. airline that should receive landing rights in Dublin. Despite a strong case to award the Dublin route to TWA—it argued that PanAm’s more extensive route structure beyond Ireland justified Shannon as the sole Irish base for PanAm—the latter was nevertheless awarded the Dublin service. The decision, made by the Civil Aviation Board, drew some controversy but was not, as suggested by some in the White House, overturned.⁴⁷ PanAm sent a delegation to Ireland in early 1967 with a dossier of facts and figures to justify its entry to Dublin airport. These were highlighted by the suggestion that ‘every 5,000 additional U.S. visitors means about one million dollars more revenue and 300 more jobs for Irish workers’.⁴⁸

The decision was not without economic cost in the United States, either. Significantly, the Missouri Delegation in Congress wrote to President Johnson in September 1966 raising its concern that not awarding the Dublin route to TWA might imperil the nearly ten thousand people in Missouri who were employed by TWA and the \$25-million worth of supplies from Missouri

⁴³‘No landing rights at Dublin for US jets’, *Irish Press*, 1 December 1965 and ‘Aer Lingus to operate Dublin–Shannon link with U.S. airlines’, *The Irish Times*, 20 January 1966.

⁴⁴National Archives of Ireland, Department of Transport (hereafter NAI TRAN), CA/1/2006/143/40, Aide Memoir, Discussions with US on entry for American airlines to Dublin.

⁴⁵‘Shannon talks “a lot of nonsense”’, *Limerick Leader* 4 April 1966.

⁴⁶‘Taoiseach asked to resist U.S. pressures’, *The Irish Times*, 4 April 1966.

⁴⁷LBJ Library, White House Central Files, Civil Aviation CA7/Ireland, Box 12, Memorandum for Joseph Califano from John Robson, 6 January 1967 and Memorandum for the President, 7 December 1966.

⁴⁸‘PanAm men come with a huge dossier’, *Sunday Independent*, 19 February 1967.

vendors that was purchased by the airline. It had been acknowledged that 'If PanAm gets Dublin, TWA, with almost no cities in Europe which it serves after stopping in Shannon, might give up Shannon, and hence its Irish service, altogether.'⁴⁹ These facts, while overlooked at the time, may have been considered when Dublin landing rights were finally awarded nearly a decade later.

The issue of how the US could force Ireland into action over Dublin landing rights was tricky. The trump card the Americans possessed, which would eventually be played in the 1970s, was the possible termination of Irish traffic rights in New York City. The Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) made this recommendation to President Johnson in 1967, a watered-down version of the recommendation made by PanAm, which had suggested the full termination of the agreement. This followed what the National Security Council termed its 'third major negotiating effort in six years to seek US airline access to Dublin.'⁵⁰

With this card in hand, negotiations to attempt to secure landing rights in Dublin for PanAm began in Dublin on 28 February 1967. The US felt that reducing demands from landing rights for three airlines to rights for just one, as per President Johnson's letter to the Civil Aviation Board on 11 February 1966, made the request considerably more reasonable.⁵¹ The Irish government disagreed, refusing to make any concessions on the matter.⁵² American frustration was evident in state papers from the time:

The need for a technical stop at Shannon no longer exists; the commercial value of the route exchange is obviously out of balance; and Shannon is no longer satisfactory as the single traffic point in Ireland in view of the rapidly expanding United States–Ireland tourist trade and the extension of Irish transatlantic services from Shannon to Dublin some years ago...The US Government has been somewhat sympathetic to the Irish contentions in the past, but, with the improvement in conditions and with the reduction in the scope of the US request, the occasion has now come when not only Irish fears and aspirations can be answered but also the interest of the US traveling public and the US airline objective must be met.⁵³

The Johnson administration pointed out the terms of the 1945 agreement, whereby New York, Boston and Chicago were made available to Irish airlines in exchange for Shannon:

Under the circumstances then prevailing, this three-for-one exchange was seen by both sides to be equitable because at that time Shannon was not only the most important international airport in Ireland but for technical reasons

⁴⁹LBJ Library, White House Central Files, Civil Aviation CA7/Ireland, Box 12, Letter from the Missouri Delegation in Congress to Johnson, 28 September 1966 and Memorandum for the president, 7 December 1966.

⁵⁰LBJ Library, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Box 195, Memorandum for the president, 7 April 1967.

⁵¹LBJ Library, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Box 195, Memorandum for Mr Walt W. Rostow, the White House from Benjamin H. Read, Executive Secretary, Department of State, 24 February 1967, Civil Aviation Negotiations with Ireland.

⁵²NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Memorandum for the government, 'The question of the entry of a U.S. air carrier to Dublin', January 1970.

⁵³LBJ Library, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Box 195, States position in bilateral air transport consultations with Ireland.

for aircraft range and navigation was the principal entry point for all transatlantic services into Northern Europe.⁵⁴

This was particularly problematic for the Americans after Aer Lingus began serving Boston and New York in 1958. They stated that 'it is the firm US conviction that such equality of opportunity no longer exists in the air transport relations between Ireland and the United States and has not existed for several years.'⁵⁵ It was also significant that the charges administered to aircraft landing in Ireland at Shannon, £140 for a DC8, were the second-highest in Europe, after those charged by Britain.⁵⁶ For this amount, airlines felt they were justified in seeking landing rights for the destination their passengers sought to visit.

The realities of 1967 air travel were no longer adequately reflected in the 1945 agreement. New aircraft with longer ranges meant that Ireland was no longer a necessary stop on a transatlantic air voyage, nor was it one sought by the developing international tourist industry in what was the United Nations International Tourist Year.⁵⁷

The lack of transatlantic air traffic at Dublin airport began to hinder the development of tourist amenities in the capital city; in 1967 it was revealed that Hilton Hotels would not go ahead with plans to build its hotel at Santry without the granting of landing rights at Dublin airport for US airlines. William Prigge, the vice-president of marketing of Hilton Hotels International, commented 'we do not feel that it is necessary to issue a statement on the lack of activity on the site, but we will not start construction until the US airlines are flying into Dublin.'⁵⁸ Hilton had announced its intention to commence construction on a Dublin property in 1961. The *Irish Press* reported in late 1967, however, that although the Dublin tourist industry was suffering because of a series of handicaps, US landing rights at Dublin airport was not one of them.⁵⁹

As the US presidential election year of 1968 began, tension between the United States and Ireland over the issue, and related matters, remained high, as evident in a memorandum from Benjamin Read, the executive secretary to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, to Walt Rostow, a special assistant for National Security Affairs:

Since 1961 we have participated in a fruitless dialogue with the Irish about their adamant refusal to grant to Pan-American landing rights at Dublin Airport... The Irish have refused to make the slightest concession on the landing rights problem and their latest response categorically rejected our representations... The Irish have recently informed us that they strenuously object to U.S. Navy vessels, either nuclear-powered or carrying nuclear weapons, entering Irish territorial waters. They have said that they will assume that any U.S. ship entering Irish waters is non-nuclear. Navy's position, which has been

⁵⁴LBJ Library, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Box 195, Memorandum, United States Airline entry into Dublin, 31 March 1967.

⁵⁵LBJ Library, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Box 195, Memorandum, United States Airline entry into Dublin, 31 March 1967.

⁵⁶Hugh Munro, 'The American airlines and Dublin', *The Irish Times*, 30 May 1967.

⁵⁷See United Nations Official Document, General Assembly, Twenty-First Session, 2148 (XXI) International Tourist Year, available at: [\(http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2148%20\(XXI\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2148%20(XXI)) (20 April 2015).

⁵⁸Tony Kelly, 'No Hilton without U.S. airlines landings', *The Irish Times*, 21 October 1967.

⁵⁹'Dublin tourism suffering from handicaps', *Irish Press*, 14 November 1967.

challenged only by Ceylon, is not to confirm or deny that a particular vessel is nuclear or non-nuclear.⁶⁰

Following the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy, Taoiseach Jack Lynch visited the United States in early June to attend Kennedy's funeral, the only international head of government to do so. During the two-day visit, Lynch met briefly with Johnson, and 'had an informal and friendly discussion of current affairs and mutual friends for approximately twenty minutes'.⁶¹ The avoidance of the landing-rights issue as a topic of conversation was deliberate, with George Springsteen noting that the US government decided to leave the issue until 1969.⁶²

JOHN MOORE, THE 747 AND THE PATH TO RESOLUTION

The 1968 US presidential election brought Richard Nixon, a president very familiar with Irish politicians, to the White House. In his role as vice-president, Nixon had met with Taoiseach John A. Costello in March 1956 and with President Seán T. O'Kelly three years later, when the Irish statesmen visited the United States. He then met Taoiseach Seán Lemass in Dublin in July 1966, but had neglected to include an official visit to Ireland during his European tour of 1963, when he met with British prime minister Harold Wilson.⁶³

In early 1969 Aer Lingus announced its interest in operating a regular service to Toronto after the Ottawa government opened up the market to some European airlines following the completion of the new terminal at Toronto International Airport. One potential reciprocal offer was landing rights for Air Canada in Dublin.⁶⁴

In April 1969, it was announced by Aer Rianta, the company responsible for the management of Dublin Airport, that expansion work would begin at Dublin and Shannon airports to cater for Boeing 747 jumbo jets, capable of carrying between 450 and 500 passengers and scheduled to begin landing in Ireland in the summer of 1970.⁶⁵ The opening up of Dublin airport as a transatlantic stop was no longer avoidable. With the launching of the 747, *The Irish Times* noted that 'no longer will landing rights at New York, Boston and Chicago suffice', for Aer Lingus, continuing that

self-preservation demands that Aer Lingus urgently seeks landing facilities on the west coast of America at either Los Angeles or San Francisco. It is probable that in return Aer Lingus may have to reconsider the monopoly it has held in Dublin.⁶⁶

⁶⁰LBJ Library, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Box 195, Memo from Benjamin H. Read, Executive Secretary to Walt W. Rostow, 23 January 1968.

⁶¹LBJ Library, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Box 195, Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, 6 June 1968, and Memo from W.W. Rostow to the president, 8 June 1968.

⁶²LBJ Library, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, National Security File, Country File, Europe, Box 195, Memo from George Springsteen meeting with the Irish prime minister, Mr John M. Lynch, 8 June 1968.

⁶³Nixon Library, President's Personal File, Foreign Affairs File, 1969–1974, Box 167, President's meetings with foreign statesmen. Nixon had also met Winston Churchill and Queen Elizabeth on several occasions.

⁶⁴Jack Fagan, 'Aer Lingus interested in service to Toronto', *The Irish Times*, 21 January 1969.

⁶⁵'Expansion plan for airports', *The Irish Times*, 2 April 1969.

⁶⁶Jack Fagan, 'Jumbo flight opens era for Aer Lingus', *The Irish Times*, 4 December 1969.

Aer Lingus would not receive the 747 until 1971.⁶⁷

John Moore arrived in Dublin in April 1969 to serve as the US ambassador to Ireland. He arrived with his sights set on the resolution of the landing-rights issue. The Irish ambassador to the US, William Fay, wrote to Donal O’Sullivan, the assistant secretary of the Department of External Affairs, to forewarn him that Moore had alluded to the issue of landing rights in Dublin as being one that the State Department was keen he address soon after presenting his credentials in Ireland.⁶⁸

On 23 October 1969, Najeeb Halaby, the president of PanAm, gave a paper in Washington entitled ‘The great airline dilemma’. During his talk, Halaby noted:

The Government grants foreign-flag airlines access to the great American market—in a manner far from commensurate with the value of U.S. rights abroad. Our government has jealously safeguarded the privilege, for example, of Irish Airlines to operate from New York, Boston and Chicago, but has confessed in the past an inability to persuade the Irish government to permit the designated American-flag airline a comparable opening to serve Dublin. One must ask whether the reason is governmental indifference or governmental inability to moderate political preference with economic prudence.⁶⁹

Ireland continued to be sold as an attractive destination for American tourists. As Roy Foster has highlighted:

In full-page advertisements in the new colour supplements, country-house lawns and silver tea services replaced bog roads as the promised Ireland at the end of an Aer Lingus flight. Accommodation was either in a castle or a simple but perfect farmhouse: either way, unobtrusive service and splendid food was guaranteed. Horses also seemed magically omnipresent and available. This was made all the more explicit for American visitors. ‘Those hills are as green as they’ve always been. Life is as quiet as it ever was. And time has a way of standing still. Let Pan-Am take you there.’⁷⁰

Of particular significance was the fact that during the late 1960s and early 1970s, ‘there’, for PanAm at least, was Shannon airport. During a discussion with Ambassador John Moore in late December 1969, Taoiseach Jack Lynch argued that Aer Lingus’s dominance over the United States to Ireland route was ‘due to their own promotional efforts’,⁷¹ a claim that seemingly stood at odds with the fact that American airlines were only permitted one landing point in Ireland, compared to three for Aer Lingus in the United States.

Lynch also noted his caution about ‘any future impetus to the growth of Dublin at the expense of the rest of the country’; this sentiment was echoed by the Shannon Region Action Committee.⁷² That view was at odds with that of Bórd Fáilte and the agency’s American representative, who noted that ‘promotion of

⁶⁷NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Ministers meeting with Aer Lingus on 2 April 1970.

⁶⁸NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/41, Letter from Ambassador William Fay to Donal O’Sullivan, 23 May 1969.

⁶⁹NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, ‘The great airline dilemma’, an address prepared for delivery by Najeeb E. Halaby, President, Pan American World Airways before the International Aviation Club, 23 October 1969, Washington, D.C.

⁷⁰R. F. Foster, *Luck and the Irish* (Oxford, 2008), 156–7.

⁷¹NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/41, Ministers meeting with Aer Lingus on 2 April 1970.

⁷²NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Note of a meeting between the Taoiseach and Ambassador John Moore, 22 December 1969. NAI TAOIS, 2003/16/70, Letter from James O’Sullivan, Shannon Region Action Committee, to Lynch, 18 January 1970.

Ireland as a tourist stop was inhibited because the U.S. carriers could not advertise Dublin, Ireland's capital city', and who emphasised that the limited capacity of Aer Lingus 'was not maximising the tourist return for Ireland.'⁷³

Minister for Transport Brian Lenihan reviewed the Irish position in light of this meeting and was 'satisfied that the price to be paid by the region west of the Shannon and by Aerlinter is such as not to warrant the grant of any right of entry to a U.S. carrier to Dublin'.⁷⁴ There was also the threat of the possible development of Aldergrove airport outside of Belfast as a transatlantic terminal, a move that would allow airlines such as British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) to fly non-stop to the United States and Canada from Belfast. The British airline would be provided with additional rights to American cities, which Aer Lingus could not access.⁷⁵ At the time, Aer Lingus flew from Belfast to New York via Shannon, whilst BOAC flew to New York via Prestwick airport, southwest of Glasgow.⁷⁶

Frustration at continuing Irish intransigence reintroduced the idea of sanctions being imposed on Irish airlines. In January 1970 Secor Brown, the newly-installed chairman of the US Civil Aeronautics Board, stated 'I think the way to redress this is to deny the Irish access to one of our cities while we discuss the situation.'⁷⁷ *Business Week* magazine reported that the CAB requested the Nixon administration use 'economic muscle' against the Irish, noting that Brown 'is tired of foreign countries discriminating against U.S. airlines.'⁷⁸ The Irish, too, were concerned that Brown might wish to make his mark in his new role. Meanwhile, the Department of State had made informal inquiries within the House of Representatives about the possible reaction if Irish landing rights at New York were withdrawn. It was reported to the chargé d'affaires at the Irish Embassy in Washington that 'the answer was to go ahead'.⁷⁹

Neil Gleeson of Aer Lingus argued that the balance of rights was in favour of the Americans because while Aer Lingus served three US airports, it was not allowed to service the cities internally, whilst the three US carriers who used Shannon could pick up passengers for any other foreign destination.⁸⁰ His general manager, Michael Dargan, considered that the US airlines, if permitted entry to Dublin airport, 'would take a share of the market created by Aerlinter and other tourist interests with only a microscopic promotion effort on their own part'.⁸¹ Here, the issue of onward rights, secondary to actual landing rights in Dublin, emerged as a possible deal-breaker from the perspective of Aer Lingus.

Yet another round of discussions between Irish and American representatives took place in January 1970. The Irish delegation noted:

⁷³NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/41, Report of Meeting, 2 September 1970.

⁷⁴NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Memorandum for the government, 'The question of the entry of a U.S. air carrier to Dublin', January 1970.

⁷⁵NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/401, Letter from Michael Dargan to D. O'Riordan, 25 June 1970 and Letter from D. O'Riordan to Michael Dargan, 1 July 1970.

⁷⁶'New Aer Lingus transatlantic service', *The Irish Times*, 23 May 1968.

⁷⁷'Move to ban Aer Lingus from N.Y.', *Irish Press*, 23 January 1970 and Jack Fagan, 'U.S. airlines renew Dublin landing plan', *The Irish Times*, 24 January 1970.

⁷⁸*Business Week*, 20 December 1969.

⁷⁹NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Letter from Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of Ireland, Washington D.C., to Dr Donal O'Sullivan, Assistant Secretary, Department of External Affairs, 17 January 1970, and 'Jumbo jet "war" looming', *Sunday Independent* 24 January 1970.

⁸⁰Jack Fagan, 'U.S. airlines renew Dublin landing plan', *The Irish Times*, 24 January 1970.

⁸¹NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Letter from Michael Dargan to D. O'Riordan, 10 March 1970.

It is clear that the present [American] Delegation have no mandate either to denounce the Agreement or to threaten to denounce it. It is equally clear that this course had not been officially considered in relation to the present negotiations, because the American Delegation arrived in the expectation that they could reach some kind of agreement with us.⁸²

The Irish were in no doubt that the American delegation would return to Washington and ‘recommend denunciation of the Agreement’, given their understanding that ‘that the Americans will not accept the present position indefinitely’.⁸³ Further, informal, discussions took place between Moore, Jack Lynch, Minister for External Affairs Patrick Hillery and Minister for Transport and Power Brian Lenihan. Following these discussions, Desmond O’Malley, the parliamentary secretary for the taoiseach, emphasised the view that

It is important for the whole western region that the American airlines should continue to service Shannon alone. Dublin is already overcrowded and overdeveloped and it is in the national interests that the international air terminal should remain in the west.

Aer Lingus had a commitment of £71 million for fleet development and had to retain its high load factor, with about three-quarters of the total number of Atlantic passengers flying Aer Lingus, to maintain this progress.⁸⁴ This figure included investment in 747 aircraft.

Aer Lingus was concerned that the granting of landing rights to an American airline would cost the company between £750,000 and £1 million.⁸⁵ Privately, Aer Lingus was willing to concede Dublin rights to US airlines, but felt that it needed a little time in order to ready itself for the challenge of direct competition from the American company or companies. Michael Dargan telephoned the taoiseach and admitted that Ireland could not deny Dublin rights to the US airlines in perpetuity. He could, however, ‘envisage an amendment of the Air Agreement for Summer 1973 by which time Aerlinter would have established themselves with the Jumbo’.⁸⁶ Ultimately, this was precisely how the situation would be resolved, though an un-named Aer Lingus source assured the *Irish Examiner* that investment in Shannon would continue ‘even though it is costing us a lot of money’.⁸⁷

There was, at this time, some acknowledgement within the Irish government that the argument presented to the Americans in the past, namely that the balance of advantage lay with them, could no longer be used for three reasons: ‘the Americans do not believe it...it is irrelevant in a situation which will be determined by bargaining power’, and, perhaps most significantly, ‘it is not true’.⁸⁸ Ambassador John Moore had told Brian Lenihan that ‘he thought the outlook [for a resolution favourable to Ireland] was now poor’.⁸⁹ Moore added that he ‘admired the hard headed Irish attitude which had kept the U.S. out of Dublin

⁸²NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Aide memoire, Discussions with U.S. on entry for American airlines to Dublin.

⁸³NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Aide memoire, Discussions with U.S. on entry for American airlines to Dublin

⁸⁴Jack Fagan, ‘Secret talks over landing rights’, *The Irish Times*, 29 January 1970. See also NAI TAOIS, 2002/8/91, Memo, 6 February 1970.

⁸⁵Jack Fagan, ‘Row about landing rights at Shannon’, *The Irish Times*, 21 February 1970.

⁸⁶NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Ministers meeting with Aer Lingus on 2 April 1970.

⁸⁷*Irish Examiner*, 22 February 1970.

⁸⁸NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Memorandum, 3 February 1970.

⁸⁹NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Memorandum, 3 February 1970.

for so many years but he thought that this line was no longer practical politics and should have been abandoned before it was too late'.⁹⁰

Dargan travelled to Washington in February 1970 to meet with presidential aide Peter Flanagan and Secor Browne. During this meeting, he reaffirmed that 'if...the U.S. authorities let matters stand until Autumn 1972 Aer Lingus would then not object to opening of negotiations in the knowledge that a U.S. airline might...serve Dublin in 1973'.⁹¹ Dargan had earlier approached Ambassador Moore with this idea, who 'did not think that deferment of this order was on but it might be possible to negotiate something on these lines'.⁹²

NIXON SUPPORT FOR US AIRLINES

On 22 June 1970 President Nixon approved a new international air transport policy, which was aimed at improving opportunities for all US airlines. His statement emphasised that

attempts to restrict U.S. carrier operations abroad should be vigorously opposed, and, where required, the United States should take appropriate measures against the carriers of foreign countries restricting U.S. carrier operations in violation of the terms of bilateral agreements or of the principle of reciprocity.⁹³

Official reports on the relationship between the United States and Ireland had assumed a repetitive quality thanks to the persistence of the landing-rights issue. Ahead of President Nixon's October 1970 European trip, Henry Kissinger noted that:

Our only major bilateral problem centers on the Irish refusal (reiterated last January) to grant us civil air landing rights at Dublin. The Irish may urge you to recede from our strong insistence on these rights. Peter Flanagan considers it important that our position not be compromised, and recommends that if the Irish raise the matter, you merely indicate that you will take into consideration the views they express.⁹⁴

Taoiseach Jack Lynch made a reciprocal visit to the White House to celebrate St Patrick's Day in March 1971.⁹⁵

The following month, Aer Lingus added fuel to the fire of the landing-rights issue by announcing the discontinuance of the service from Shannon to Dublin, leaving transatlantic passengers using other airlines with severely limited options for onward travel from Shannon. Aer Lingus pointed out that the service was uneconomic, with a 'poor record of support' from US passengers, and that passengers had plenty of options if they used the Irish carrier for their transatlantic travel.⁹⁶ Aer Lingus claimed it needed to increase revenues

⁹⁰ NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Memorandum, 3 February 1970.

⁹¹ NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Notes on discussions in Washington, 11–13 February, with Mr. Flanagan, Aide to President Nixon, and with Mr. S. Browne, Chairman of the C.A.B.

⁹² NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/40, Report of meeting, undated, Ministers meeting with Aer Lingus on 2 April 1970.

⁹³ NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/31, Note for minister's meeting on 19 January 1971 with Messrs Lynch and Dargan of Aer Lingus; see also 'President approves international air policy', *Arizona Republic*, 23 June 1970.

⁹⁴ Nixon Library, Nixon Presidential Materials, National Security Council Files, President's Trip Files, Box 469, Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger.

⁹⁵ Nixon Library, President's Personal File, White House Social Events, 1969–1974, Box 130, Memorandum for Mrs Stuart from Robert C. Odle, Jr., 3 February 1971.

⁹⁶ 'Aer Lingus gives link flight figures', *Sunday Independent*, 18 April 1971 and 'U.S. protest at Aer Lingus cuts', *Irish Press*, 12 April 1971. The Department of Transport and Power noted that while only ten percent of transatlantic passengers made use of the route in 1966, and this had

by £8,000,000 to save the company from redundancies, though it was noted that cutting the route only saved £100,000 per year.⁹⁷ US Secretary of Commerce Maurice Stans was scheduled to meet the taoiseach to discuss the implications of the decision, meanwhile the Department of Transport and Power said it would try to defer talks on landing rights at Dublin if the request was made by the US government for a reopening of negotiations on the bilateral agreement between the two governments.⁹⁸ The process of stalling to provide Aer Lingus with the time required to establish itself as a credible option for jumbo-jet travel had begun in earnest.

Stans argued that ‘last year 120,000 people from the United States came to Ireland and spent about \$50 million in the country’.⁹⁹ Despite his best efforts, the discussions failed to reach a resolution and Ambassador Moore assumed the lead US role in talks, although it was noted that with ‘Mr. Stans having failed to elicit any undertaking from the Taoiseach, it seems unlikely that the ambassador will achieve a reversal of Government policy’. After the meeting, Stans would not directly address the possibility that Aer Lingus would have its landing rights at an American hub removed, saying ‘It would be foolish to speculate about something that has not yet reached the framework of negotiations.’¹⁰⁰

The following day, Minister for Finance George Colley instructed Aer Lingus to restore its Shannon to Dublin route. *The Irish Times* noted that ‘while the Government’s decision yesterday pleased U.S. interests, it peeved the Aer Lingus management’.¹⁰¹ The Shannon to Dublin flight had been introduced as a compromise measure and its removal had only further undermined the Irish position on the issue of Dublin landing rights for US aircraft. Further high-level talks were planned for the summer of 1971. Ahead of these talks, on 7 July, Deputy National Security Advisor Alexander Haig submitted a memorandum:

Earlier this year the Department of State recommended to the President that he authorize the delivery of notice of termination of Aer Lingus’ landing rights at New York effective one year later, after private notification of this decision of Prime Minister Lynch, unless the United States received firm assurances that a U.S. carrier would be granted landing rights at Dublin. It was decided that no action should be taken at that time. The President has reconsidered this recommendation and has decided to authorize, after private notification of Prime Minister Lynch, the delivery of notice of termination of Aer Lingus’ landing rights at New York, effective one year later.¹⁰²

The American trump card was duly played in August, and it was soon speculated that the Irish government may have been close to yielding landing rights in Dublin for an American airline.¹⁰³ Tom O’Donnell, the Fine Gael spokesman on Transport and Power and a Limerick T.D., said that ‘if the U.S. Government

fallen to 4.3% in 1970, the US airlines had ‘reasonable grounds form complaint’. See NAI TAOIS, 2002/8/91, Aide memoire, ‘Proposed withdrawal of air link services, Dublin-Shannon-Dublin’, 16 April 1971; Memorandum for the government, 24 March 1971.

⁹⁷‘U.S. ambassador steps into air row’, *Irish Independent*, 12 April 1971.

⁹⁸Jack Fagan, ‘Government firm against U.S. landings’, *The Irish Times*, 15 April 1971.

⁹⁹‘U.S. envoy in air pact talks with Lynch’, *The Irish Times*, 19 April 1971.

¹⁰⁰Jack Fagan, ‘Talks fail to end air link problem’, *The Irish Times*, 20 April 1971.

¹⁰¹Jack Fagan, ‘Shannon air link restored’, *The Irish Times*, 21 April 1971.

¹⁰²Nixon Library, White House Central Files, Subject Files, CO–Countries, Ireland, Memorandum from Alexander Haig, 7 July 1971.

¹⁰³‘Landing rights for U.S. in Dublin soon?’, *The Irish Times*, 29 July 1971.

or airlines tried to use bulldozer tactics, the Irish Government should warn about the damage to Irish-American relations'.¹⁰⁴

A number of questions were asked in the Dáil in early August 1971, but no decision had been made about the Irish strategy on the issue, although James Tully, Labour T.D. for Meath, said that the US airlines had committed to increasing the number of tourists they brought to Ireland by 60,000 the first year, 75,000 the second and 100,000 the third year if they were granted Dublin landing rights.¹⁰⁵ The potential benefits to Irish tourism as a whole were clear, assuming the Americans made good on their commitment. Around the same time, BOAC announced plans for a £75 return fare to the United States, a move that could have created a price war in the transatlantic air travel market, placing further pressure on the Dublin route for both US and Irish airlines.¹⁰⁶

Two days of talks took place in August in Washington with no agreement reached, and the Irish media were concerned that Aer Lingus was facing a ban from New York 'on the grounds that the imbalance of rights accorded by the 1945 bilateral agreement is unfair'.¹⁰⁷ The State Department was said to be 'dissatisfied with the attitude of the Irish negotiators' in Washington. One US source claimed that the Irish negotiators were 'without authority to discuss entry to Dublin on any basis'.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, Aer Lingus was scheduled to once again discontinue its Shannon to Dublin service after October on the grounds that maintaining it would be uneconomical.

Nixon's adviser Peter Flanigan wrote to Kissinger in the aftermath of the talks:

The negotiations to grant U.S. airlines landing rights in Dublin have failed. The Irish delegation came here on Monday, August 9, saying that they were not in a position to authorize these rights. They left on Tuesday with the understanding that the agreement between the countries would be denounced on Thursday, denying Aer Lingus landing rights in New York as of a year from the date of denunciation. The State Department has, of course, agreed to negotiate during the year towards another satisfactory conclusion. This decision is in line with the President's memorandum as of June 18.¹⁰⁹

Formal notification of the US intent to debar Aer Lingus from New York was made the following day.¹¹⁰ Traffic to Kennedy airport was estimated to constitute seventy per cent of Aer Lingus's Atlantic operation. This was, as Aer Lingus general manager Michael Dargan noted, a severe blow.¹¹¹

In response, the Irish announced they would negotiate a new bilateral air agreement. *The Irish Times* noted that 'no one seriously believes that Aer Lingus will be debarred from New York'.¹¹² Nonetheless, an *Irish Times* special study of

¹⁰⁴Dáil questions on U.S. landing rights at Dublin', *The Irish Times*, 31 July 1971.

¹⁰⁵U.S. airlines pushing claim to fly to Dublin', *The Irish Times*, 5 August 1971.

¹⁰⁶U.S. pressure on Aerlinter today?', *Irish Independent*, 9 August 1971.

¹⁰⁷Jack Fagan, 'Talks on landing rights fail', *The Irish Times*, 11 August 1971.

¹⁰⁸Jack Fagan, 'Top level talks on landing rights', *The Irish Times*, 14 August 1971.

¹⁰⁹Nixon Library, White House Central Files, Subject Files, CO—Countries, Ireland, Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Peter Flanigan, 10 August 1971.

¹¹⁰Christopher Lydon, 'Irish planes to be barred here unless U.S. jets can use Dublin', *New York Times*, 19 August, 1971.

¹¹¹Jack Fagan, 'U.S. aims to keep Aer Lingus out of New York', *The Irish Times*, 19 August 1971.

¹¹²Jack Fagan, 'Government will negotiate new air agreement', *The Irish Times*, 20 August 1971.

the issue was published on 28 August 1971, examining tourism and industrial implications. Bill Murdoch wrote on the ‘good deal of uncertainty’ caused to industrialists in the Shannon area as a result of the ultimatum and suggested that ‘there could be a complete collapse of trade in the region if radical changes were made to the existing agreement’. Shannon Industrial Estate did a total of £63.2 million worth of trade in 1970, £53.5 million of which was air freight. Of the twenty-four manufacturing companies in the area, fourteen were US owned.¹¹³

Aer Lingus suffered a blow in October when the National Tourism Council voted overwhelmingly to support the demands of the US government.¹¹⁴ The airline had already suffered a drop in bookings as a result of the threatened ban for the airline at Kennedy airport.¹¹⁵ This was significant because there were no alternative carriers for direct flights from Dublin, meaning passengers would have to travel through Shannon or London.

PanAm vice president James Montgomery visited Limerick and Clare in mid-October and attempted to reassure locals that his airline had no intention of bypassing Shannon. Montgomery’s statement did little to console local politicians, one stating that ‘we do not believe that we can develop tourist business into the west of Ireland without the addition of Dublin’.¹¹⁶

With Aer Lingus set to lose landing rights in New York in August 1972, and given the serious threat to jobs that this carried with it, further discussions took place in November 1971.¹¹⁷ The announcement was formally conveyed to the Dáil on 28 October by Minister for Transport and Power Brian Lenihan:

following the Government’s most recent refusal to grant such rights, the US authorities gave notice, under the provisions of the bilateral Air Agreement between the two countries, that with effect from 18th August, 1972, landing rights for Aerlinter at New York would be withdrawn.¹¹⁸

Limerick’s Tom O’Donnell, the Fine Gael shadow minister for Transport and Power, accused the government of handling the landing rights issue in an ‘inept and irresponsible manner’.¹¹⁹

An Irish government delegation left Dublin on 21 November 1971 for the talks two days later, led by Diarmuid Ó Ríordáin, secretary of the Department of Transport and Power, along with members of the departments of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Industry and Commerce and the Department of the Taoiseach, and representatives of Bord Fáilte, Aer Lingus and the Shannon Free Airport Development Committee.¹²⁰ The August 1970 talks had been led by the Department of Foreign Affairs, now in a secondary role, after American anger at the ‘entrenched position taken by the Irish representatives’, and ‘[t]he absence of any flexibility in the Irish negotiating position’ at that time.¹²¹ The *Irish*

¹¹³Bill Murdoch, ‘Uncertainty for industry in Shannon area’, *The Irish Times*, 28 August 1971. The Irish also contemplated retaliating by barring US airlines from Shannon, see Jack Fagan, ‘U.S. rights at Shannon to be cut?’, *The Irish Times*, 24 September 1971.

¹¹⁴Aer Lingus to quit tourism group over landing rights vote?, *The Irish Times*, 6 October 1971.

¹¹⁵Jack Fagan, ‘Airport talks expected in mid-November’, *The Irish Times*, 13 October 1971.

¹¹⁶Pan Am would not bypass Shannon’, *The Irish Times*, 15 October 1971.

¹¹⁷Jobs lost if Aer Lingus is banned’, *Irish Independent*, 16 November 1971.

¹¹⁸*Dáil Éireann Debates*, Ceisteanna—Questions. Oral Answers: US aircraft landing rights, 28 October 1971, available at: <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/1971/10/28/00036.asp#N5> (20 April 2015).

¹¹⁹Air landing rights case bungled—T.D.’, *The Irish Times*, 15 November 1971 and *Irish Examiner*, 15 November 1971.

¹²⁰Airline talks in U.S. tomorrow’, *The Irish Times*, 22 November 1971.

¹²¹Jack Fagan, ‘Entry rights for U.S. line to Dublin?’, *The Irish Times*, 20 November 1971.

Independent suggested 'if the Americans are not fought every inch of the way... the whole future of the Irish airline and its 6,000 employees could be in jeopardy'.¹²² The *Sunday Independent* carried an open letter to John Moore from the Shannon Region Action Committee, pleading the case against allowing US airlines into Dublin.¹²³

Ahead of the talks, it was expected that the Irish government would compromise and allow PanAm to use Dublin on a limited scale for a specified period, building up to a full service. Jack Fagan, writing in *The Irish Times*, noted that Aer Lingus sought additional landing rights in cities such as Philadelphia, Washington, Cleveland, San Francisco and Los Angeles in exchange; clearly an effort to soften the apparent blow of allowing a US carrier to land in Dublin.¹²⁴ Lynch wrote to Nixon before the meeting:

The granting or refusal of such rights is a matter of miniscule importance to the United States economy. Its effect on your broad economic policies could only be trifling. Even for your airline interests the financial implications are no more than marginal... The revenue implications for our small national airline are very considerable indeed. They had developed their existing traffic through great expense and effort. Their whole financial position would be imperiled for the sake of, as I have said, a marginal benefit for giant U.S. airline interests.¹²⁵

Lynch also attempted to stress the economic impact on the Limerick area if American airlines started to bypass Shannon:

An aspect of even wider significance which I must stress is that the future of Shannon Airport and of the Government's long-established policies for the development of the West of Ireland would be placed at hazard. Indeed the under-developed state of the West made it one of the main sources of the flow of Irish emigrants to your great country. The Shannon area is now our most promising economic growth centre outside of Dublin and we have been intent on developing to the full its industrial and tourism potential.¹²⁶

Again, this letter emphasised how dependent the Irish were on a reasonable response from the Americans. Henry Kissinger, in a comment on Lynch's letter, was abrupt in his analysis: 'No new arguments are advanced in the Prime Minister's letter, however, which should cause the United States to alter its landing rights position.'¹²⁷ Nixon's reply reassured Lynch that 'the United States has no intention of imperilling the financial position of the Irish airline or injuring the economy of Ireland', but added that he sought to 'rectify an imbalance which is very much to the disadvantage of the U.S. airline'. Nixon stressed that it was not his intention to bully Lynch on the matter: 'please do not feel that I have been insensitive to the interests and needs of your Government'.¹²⁸

The Irish Times commented that 'unless Aer Lingus is allowed continued access to Kennedy Airport, it will be unable to maintain a viable Atlantic

¹²²'Air row: U.S. gets tougher', *Irish Independent*, 19 November 1971.

¹²³'West fears sell out in air battle', *Sunday Independent*, 21 November 1971.

¹²⁴Jack Fagan, 'Entry rights for U.S. line to Dublin?', *The Irish Times*, 20 November 1971.

¹²⁵Nixon Library, NSC Files, Presidential correspondence 1969–74, Box 756, Letter from Lynch to Nixon, 19 November 1971.

¹²⁶Nixon Library, NSC Files, Presidential correspondence 1969–74, Box 756, Letter from Lynch to Nixon, 19 November 1971.

¹²⁷Nixon Library, NSC Files, Presidential correspondence 1969–74, Box 756, Memorandum for the president from Kissinger, 30 November 1971.

¹²⁸NAI, TAOIS 2002/8/91, Letter from Nixon to Lynch, 1 December 1971.

service. Even without this threat, the airline faces a serious economic challenge in the next few years.¹²⁹ Clearly it was in the best interests of the Irish government to concede landing rights to the Americans, particularly with it already established that PanAm would be the only airline permitted to fly to Dublin, and the Irish, therefore, would only be forced into making minimal concessions. This would be particularly so if PanAm's onward rights to Dublin included the provision that its aircraft landed at Shannon when travelling in either direction.¹³⁰

Sean Cronin reported that 'indications throughout the two days of talk were that the Irish side had its back to the wall, with few options left but to seek concessions from the Americans in return for the surrender of Dublin'.¹³¹ Brian Lenihan accused the Americans of playing power politics and said it was important not to impugn motives that had no basis, nor make wild or mischievous allegations.¹³² Despite Nixon's assurances in his letter, the Irish delegates to the negotiations commented that 'the U.S. delegation said that their demands were laid down by higher (presumably political) authority and were not negotiable'; they also noted that the American position had hardened.¹³³

Jack Lynch continued to present the issue as one of American greed. Speaking at the Rotary Club in Cork, the taoiseach said

we question the wisdom of a policy which would yield minimal gains to the United States in return for major damage to Irish interests...this action would appear to suggest that smaller countries would be expected to make disproportionately larger sacrifices in order to remedy U.S. problems.¹³⁴

Meanwhile, Aer Lingus presented its case to the US Civil Aeronautics Board, arguing that a public hearing into the landing-rights dispute should be heard, claiming that the US Federal Aviation Act demanded it.¹³⁵

Tension was high, too, in the Dáil. On 25 November 1971, Brian Lenihan argued with Tom O'Donnell for the latter's interventions on the issue, later arguing with Fine Gael T.D. Gerry L'Estrange who accused the government of a sell-out on the issue. L'Estrange claimed that the taoiseach had teamed up with John Mulcahy, an American friend of Lynch, to build a luxury hotel at Dublin airport.¹³⁶

Secretary of State William Rogers wrote to Jack Lynch after the failure of the November talks. He again stressed that 'we have no intention of harming Shannon...My principal concern in this matter is to rectify an imbalance which is very much to the disadvantage of the U.S. airlines, thus achieving greater equity for all concerned.' The message was clear, however, that the US

¹²⁹Jack Fagan, 'Entry rights for U.S. line to Dublin?', *The Irish Times*, 20 November 1971.

¹³⁰Jack Fagan, 'Entry rights for U.S. line to Dublin?', *The Irish Times*, 20 November 1971.

¹³¹Sean Cronin, 'Washington talks on Dublin landing rights break down', *The Irish Times*, 25 November 1971.

¹³²Lenihan gives no information about collapse of air talks in Washington', *The Irish Times*, 26 November 1971.

¹³³NAI, TAOIS 2002/8/91, Assessment of position prepared by the Irish delegation to the recent Washington talks, undated.

¹³⁴'U.S. airline demand rejected by Lynch', *The Irish Times*, 29 November 1971.

¹³⁵Jack Fagan, 'The Aer Lingus case to land at New York', *The Irish Times*, 1 December 1971.

¹³⁶*Dáil Éireann Debates*, Supplementary Estimates, 1971–72, Vote 41: Transport and Power, 25 November 1971, available at: <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/1971/11/25/00009.asp#N47> (20 April 2015); 'Clash about U.S. landing rights', *The Irish Times*, 2 December 1971; 'Lenihan refutes charge in personal statement', *Irish Press*, 3 December 1971. Mulcahy later claimed that he was not a partner in the hotel plan, 'Mulcahy not partner in hotel plan', *The Irish Times*, 4 December 1971.

government was no longer prepared to allow the monopoly on routes between the United States and Dublin to continue:

Please do not feel that I have been insensitive to the interests and needs of your government. As you know from Ambassador Moore's many conversations with you and officials of your government, we have tried for a long time to persuade your government to take some action to bring our aviation agreement into balance, and we have from time to time discussed the possibility of certain concessions on our side, but unfortunately we have had no success. It became apparent that if agreement in balance were ever to be reached, action would have to be taken by our side.¹³⁷

Hostility towards Ambassador John Moore was growing within Ireland, exemplified by a protest at the US embassy in early December.¹³⁸ Michael O'Gorman, the chairman of the Shannon Regional Action Committee, called for Moore to be recalled to Washington because of his attitude towards the Dublin landing-rights issue. Moore was, however, referred to warmly by Brendan O'Regan, the chairman of the Shannon Free Airport Development Company, as a genuine friend of Ireland.¹³⁹

In late 1971 Shannon airport received a boost when Air Canada committed to five flights per week between Montréal and Shannon for April 1972, an increase of one from the summer of 1971. Jack Horan, the Ireland manager for Air Canada, said that as long as Aer Lingus continued to provide connecting services from Shannon, Air Canada was not concerned about securing Dublin landing rights.¹⁴⁰ For 1970, Aer Lingus had carried seventy-two percent of Shannon and Dublin traffic, falling only slightly to seventy percent for the first nine months of 1971.¹⁴¹ Statistics for air-passenger traffic over the 1960s indicate that increased traffic to Shannon during the decade had seen all airlines enjoy an increase in passengers, including both TWA and PanAm.¹⁴²

RESOLUTION

The compromise that would ultimately end the impasse emerged in February 1972, with newspapers highlighting a Brian Lenihan statement that 'the admission of an American airline to Dublin could not of itself adversely affect the interests of Shannon airport and the West'.¹⁴³ With Aer Lingus's expulsion from New York scheduled for August 1972, during a debate in the Dáil on 7 March Brian Lenihan stated that his department, along with the economic consultant to the taoiseach, Dr Martin O'Donohue, were engaged in an independent survey to examine the implications for tourism in the west of Ireland if an American

¹³⁷Nixon Library, White House Central Files, Subject Files, CO-Countries, Ireland, Telegram from Secretary of State to American Embassy Dublin, 30 November 1971, Message from Rogers to Lynch.

¹³⁸'Pain attack on U.S. ambassador', *Irish Independent*, 3 December 1971.

¹³⁹'Withdrawal to U.S. of envoy urged', *The Irish Times*, 6 December 1971.

¹⁴⁰Jack Fagan, 'Extra Irish service by Air Canada', *The Irish Times*, 17 December 1971.

¹⁴¹NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/46, US/Ireland terminal passenger traffic (scheduled and non-scheduled), included in letter from M.J. Dargan, General Manager, Aer Lingus to D. O'Riordan, Secretary, Department of Transport and Power, 25 January 1972.

¹⁴²NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/46, US/Ireland terminal passenger traffic (scheduled and non-scheduled), included in letter from M.J. Dargan to D. O'Riordan.

¹⁴³'Shannon to lose BOAC training deal', *Irish Press*, 10 February 1972; Jack Fagan, 'U.S. airline to fly into Dublin', *The Irish Times*, 11 February 1972. Dargan did, however contend that the issue was a 'life or death' one for his airline, see 'Landing rights "life or death"', *Irish Independent* 3 February 1972.

carrier were allowed into Dublin. Lenihan, when pressed by Tom O'Donnell, admitted that Bord Fáilte had carried out a survey on the topic but stressed that 'it is not in the interests of everybody concerned to reveal what the findings were'.¹⁴⁴ The *Irish Press* noted the 'common belief' that the granting of landing rights was imminent in early March.¹⁴⁵ The findings of the survey remained secret but some indication of what they contained was provided through reports in May 1972 that the Irish government was apparently ready to announce its decision to let PanAm serve Dublin, but wanted to delay the announcement until after the referendum on EEC membership. PanAm would land planes in Shannon both on the way into and out of Ireland in addition to now also landing in Dublin, and Aer Lingus would be entitled to additional landing rights in the United States.¹⁴⁶

By mid-1972, nine airlines had obtained landing rights at Dublin Airport: five British airlines—British European Airways, British Midland Airways, British Island Airways, Cambrian Airways, and North East Airlines; Italian airline Alitalia; Spanish airline Iberia; Germany's Lufthansa; and S.A.S. from Scandinavia.¹⁴⁷ Still, the Irish sought to delay the seemingly inevitable arrival of PanAm flights to Dublin airport, claiming the rising violence in Northern Ireland as the reason. The US embassy in Dublin sent a memorandum to Washington with a proposal from Irish representatives to 'postpone our "August deadline" until sometime next year "when the political, Northern Ireland, and economic situations" might be better'.¹⁴⁸

Fine Gael, who had been in opposition since losing the March 1957 election, remained defiant on the issue, especially through Limerick T.D. and party spokesman on Transport and Power, Tom O'Donnell. O'Donnell argued that providing landing rights in Dublin would not solve the problems of the Irish tourist industry, stating that 'nothing could be further from the truth' and that it would have 'serious consequences' for the Shannon region.¹⁴⁹ O'Donnell also wrote to Ronald Reagan, then governor of California, asking him to try to reverse the decision to deny Aer Lingus landing rights in New York.¹⁵⁰ As an Irish government official would later note, 'the welfare of the national airline is vital to the welfare of Shannon and tourism and there is no conflict of interest between them—they stand or fall together'.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴*Dáil Éireann Debates*, Ceisteanna—Questions. Oral Answers, US airline landing rights, Tuesday, 7 March 1972, available at: <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/1972/03/07/00008.asp#N3> (20 April 2015). A memo to the taoiseach suggests that Bord Fáilte was in favour of allowing two airlines into Dublin, perhaps reason for Lenihan's reticence; NAI, TAOIS/2002/8/92, Memo "Number of US airlines to get Dublin rights", undated. Another memo shows that Lenihan saw US rights at Dublin as the only way to assure Aerlinte rights in New York were secured. He also suggested a number of lines to be used as bargaining positions, such as the admission of only one US airline to Dublin, no onward rights, additional onward rights for Aer Lingus, whilst noting that it was 'unlikely that the Americans will accept many of those points'. See NAI, TAOIS/2002/8/92, Submission to the government, 22 September 1971.

¹⁴⁵'No giving in on Shannon landing rights', *Irish Press*, 8 March 1972. Support for the Irish position was also forthcoming from Senator Edward Kennedy, see NAI TAOIS, 2003/16/70, Letter from Kennedy to Secor Browne, 30 March 1972.

¹⁴⁶Jack Fagan, 'Pan-Am gains right to fly into Dublin', *The Irish Times*, 6 May 1972.

¹⁴⁷*Dáil Éireann Debates*, Ceisteanna—Questions. Oral Answers: Airline landing rights, Wednesday, 7 June 1972, <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/1972/06/07/00024.asp#N33> (20 April 2015).

¹⁴⁸Nixon Library, White House Central Files, Subject Files, CO—Countries, Ireland, Memorandum for Peter Flanigan from David Gunning, 22 June 1972.

¹⁴⁹'Appeal on air rights', *The Irish Times*, 22 May 1972.

¹⁵⁰'F.G. appeal to Reagan on landing rights', *The Irish Times*, 20 July 1972.

¹⁵¹NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/42, Note for the minister's information, undated.

The political implications of the landing-rights issue during an election year in the United States were considered severe by *The Irish Times*, which speculated that 'a decision to declare an aeronautical war against Ireland would not go down well with Irish Americans, in the U.S. presidential year'.¹⁵² Indeed, the formal agreement giving Aer Lingus landing rights in New York was scheduled to end on Friday, 18 August 1972, less than three months before the election. A few days in advance of the deadline, it was reported that the airline was likely to be allowed to continue its services into Kennedy Airport, and Aer Lingus was duly provided a stay of execution until the end of the year to allow for the completion of Civil Aeronautics Board proceedings.¹⁵³ With the election imminent, Nixon was cautious about the prospect of damaging his campaign, and Minister for External Affairs Patrick Hillery's timely visit to New York in October prompted a meeting with the president. *The Irish Times* speculated that the meeting could mark the culmination of the row.¹⁵⁴ Kissinger was advised:

This will primarily be a courtesy visit, but Hillery will probably raise the one big issue which troubles Irish-American relations, landing rights. He will want to describe the political difficulties his Government faces in granting us rights to land at Dublin, and he will probably request that the President make some kind of 'optical' concession so that the Irish Government can sell a settlement to the Irish people.¹⁵⁵

Unfortunately for Hillery, there was a lack of support for the Irish position among senior Irish-American politicians. Even then-Congressman Hugh Carey felt that 'The economic unbalance in the agreement was too apparent.' The White House's position was 'that part of the difficulty preventing a solution is that the Irish simply do not believe we will ever bar them from New York. They have prevented such a thing for twenty-six years and they believe they can do so forever.'¹⁵⁶

Near the end of 1972, with Aer Lingus's landing permit for New York close to termination, the Irish announced that Taoiseach Jack Lynch would visit the United States in January 1973. This enabled them to again postpone the termination of the agreement, buying Aer Lingus a little more time.¹⁵⁷ Kissinger noted that the issue of landing rights was not the major purpose of Lynch's visit:

In mid-December, the Irish Government announced that Prime Minister Lynch planned to visit the United States during the period January 5–11 to promote U.S. investment in Ireland. While unannounced, it was also indicated by the Prime Minister's office that he hoped to dampen private U.S.

¹⁵²'Decision on airlines row imminent', *The Irish Times*, 26 July 1972.

¹⁵³'New York ban on Aer Lingus not likely yet', *The Irish Times*, 14 August 1972 and Jack Fagan, 'U.S. eases ban on Aer Lingus', 16 August 1972.

¹⁵⁴Jack Fagan, 'Hillery to see Rogers on landing rights row', *The Irish Times*, 22 September 1972, Dennis Kennedy, 'Hillery to meet Nixon to discuss landing rights row', 6 October 1972.

¹⁵⁵Nixon Library, White House Central Files, Subject Files, CO—Countries, Ireland, Memorandum for Kissinger from Theodore Eliot, Jr., Executive Secretary, Department of State, 5 October 1972, President's meeting with Irish foreign minister Dr. Patrick Hillery, 6 October 1972.

¹⁵⁶Nixon Library, White House Central Files, Subject Files, CO—Countries, Ireland, Document, 'Landing Rights'. A visit to the US by Brendan O'Regan of the Shannon Free Airport Development Company, which included dinner at the home of Nixon consultant Peter Flanigan, emphasised the consistency in the US position. See NAI TAOIS, 2003/16/70, Letter from O'Regan to Lynch, 24 October 1972.

¹⁵⁷Michael McInerney, 'Lynch for U.S. in January, will talk about North', *The Irish Times*, 16 December 1972.

support for the IRA and to settle US–Irish civil air issues during the visit... Thus far there has been no request by the Irish Government for Lynch to meet with you. However, on December 21, Ambassador Warnock requested a meeting with Secretary Rogers during which he expressed the hope that the U.S. would decide to put off a final decision on terminating Irish landing rights at New York (now scheduled for the end of the year) until ‘sometime after the Lynch visit’. Informally the Irish Foreign Office has clearly indicated to State that the Prime Minister would very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you, and it is safe to assume he will wish to raise the landing rights issue.¹⁵⁸

Ireland had set aside significant financial investment in advertising Ireland, spending £2 million in 1973 to advertise the country to prospective tourists in the United States.¹⁵⁹

In the Irish general election of 28 February 1973, despite securing an increase in voting percentage, Lynch’s Fianna Fáil party lost six seats and a Fine Gael–Labour coalition took power. The extent to which the landing rights issue factored in voting behaviour seems to have been minimal. Significantly, the Fianna Fáil party did not suffer serious electoral losses in either the Limerick East or Limerick West constituencies for the 1973 election, despite the best attempts of Fine Gael politicians like Tom O’Donnell. Across the county, Fianna Fáil totalled 30,657 first preference votes.¹⁶⁰

Henry Kissinger observed:

No significant differences are anticipated in US–Irish relations under the Cosgrave government. Cosgrave, son of Ireland’s first Prime Minister, is generally well disposed toward the United States and has visited here on several occasions. It is possible, however, that the new government will seek to reopen the bilateral question of civil landing rights.¹⁶¹

Liam Cosgrave’s government moved quickly and was able finally to resolve the issue in June 1973. One US airline would be permitted to land at Dublin, with the expectation that some concessions would be made to Aer Lingus with regard landing rights in the United States, along with its rights at New York being restored.¹⁶² The Americans, while acknowledging the complicating factor of the developing conflict in Northern Ireland, felt that ‘the Irish Government successfully exploited our reluctance to take steps which might inflame that situation’.¹⁶³ The Irish were also successful in denying US airlines onward rights from Dublin,

¹⁵⁸Nixon Library, White House Central Files, Subject Files, CO—Countries, Ireland, Schedule Proposal from Henry Kissinger: Meeting with Prime Minister of Ireland John Lynch, Monday January 8 1973, 23 December 1972.

¹⁵⁹John McCarthy, ‘Government spending £2m. in U.S. on advertising Ireland’, *The Irish Times*, 7 May 1973.

¹⁶⁰See Michael Gallagher (ed.), *Irish elections 1948–77: results and analysis* (Abingdon, 2009), 283–320.

¹⁶¹Nixon Library, White House Central Files, Subject Files, CO—Countries, Ireland, Memorandum for the President from Kissinger, 3 March 1973; NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/42, Note for the Minister’s Information, undated.

¹⁶²‘Announcement likely this week of agreement on landing rights’, *The Irish Times*, 11 June 1973.

¹⁶³Nixon Library, NSC Files, Country Files—Europe, Box 694, Memorandum for Kissinger from Charles A. Cooper, 20 July 1973, Amendment to Civil Air Agreement with Ireland.

meaning that flights landing in Dublin would have to terminate and turnaround.¹⁶⁴

Newly installed Minister for Transport and Power Peter Barry confirmed that:

The airline permitted to land in Dublin would have to stop in Shannon in both directions and would terminate in Dublin before turning round for the return trip to the U.S. via Shannon. The Department of State gave two reasons why they sought the change in the agreement: (1) that no other nation with civil aviation agreements with the U.S. excluded airlines from the principal city of that nation and (2) Aer Lingus were permitted landing rights in three cities in the U.S.¹⁶⁵

Shortly after the announcement, *The Irish Times* carried a series of articles by Eugene Murray, which suggested that 'the issue involved collusion between American Big Business, the Nixon Administration, the American Ambassador to Ireland and U.S. business in this country', claiming that 'the United States blackmailed the Dublin Government'.¹⁶⁶ Murray alleged that

Richard Nixon's private connections with Pan America are so numerous as to make a full documentation of them impossible. Nixon's Ambassador to Ireland, John Moore, who as vice-president of the Grace corporation, lead (*sic*) the first U.S. private investors' mission to this country in 1967, was for years directly linked to PanAm through the Latin American airline Panagra.¹⁶⁷

The Civil Aeronautics Board had, in 1967, decided to assign the Dublin landing rights to PanAm, but by October 1973 it became apparent that it would be Trans World Airlines that would be granted the rights, at which point Pan American reportedly threatened to withdraw services to Ireland.¹⁶⁸ For Jack Fagan, PanAm had 'found it difficult to develop traffic since the violence first erupted in Northern Ireland in 1969'. Despite the Shannon stopover, Fagan noted that 'it is clear that Dublin stands to gain more tourists when the airline opens up shop in Dublin.' The first TWA flight into Dublin landed on 2 May 1974.¹⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

The Dublin landing-rights issue represents Irish diplomacy at its craftiest. Successive Fianna Fáil governments provided the Irish approach to the United States on the issue with a relatively consistent platform and found the Americans unwilling to introduce overly punitive sanctions on Aer Lingus. By the time TWA was permitted landing rights at Dublin Airport, Aer Lingus had received and integrated its 747 aircraft into its fleet and was in a position to attempt to compete with the larger American airlines on transatlantic routes. The Irish government had successfully protected its national airline despite the rapid development of the airline industry over the twelve years of the landing-rights dispute.

¹⁶⁴NAI TRAN, CA/1/2006/143/42, Note for the minister's information, undated.

¹⁶⁵Andrew Hamilton, 'U.S.-Irish landing dispute settled', *The Irish Times*, 12 June 1973.

¹⁶⁶Eugene Murray, 'Collusion by U.S. groups on landing rights issue', *The Irish Times*, 19 June 1973.

¹⁶⁷Eugene Murray, 'Collusion by U.S. groups on landing rights issue', *The Irish Times*, 19 June 1973. This was cited by Diarmaid Ferriter in *Ambiguous republic: Ireland in the 1970s* (London, 2012), 47–8.

¹⁶⁸'Dublin landing rights may now go to T.W.A.', *The Irish Times*, 23 October 1973.

¹⁶⁹Jack Fagan, 'T.W.A. service to Dublin inaugurated', *The Irish Times*, 3 May 1974.

The bilateral agreement with the United States was renegotiated in 1990, providing Aer Lingus with landing rights at Los Angeles and additional US airlines with landing rights at Dublin on the same terms as those of the 1974 agreement. This was amended in 1993, resulting in fewer planes being required to land at Shannon. Since 30 March 2008, the European Union and the United States have operated an open-skies aviation policy, leading to the end of the so-called Shannon Stopover, although a 2005 agreement between Ireland and the US would in any case have allowed US airlines to operate more freely by the end of April 2008. In mid 2010, Aer Lingus announced that it would suspend transatlantic services from Shannon between January and March of the following year as part of cost-cutting measures.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰RTÉ News, 'Aer Lingus will suspend Shannon-US flights', 16 June 2010, available at: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2010/0615/132229-shannon/> (20 April 2015).

