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Summary record of meeting between the Taoiseach and
the British Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street,
on Monday, 19th December, 1966

Present:-

Irish Side:

Mr. J. Lynch, Taoiseach
Mr. T. K. Whitaker, Secretary, Department of Finance
Mr. Hugh McCann, Secretary, Department of
External Affairs
Ambassador J. G. Molloy

British Side:

Mr. Harold Wilson, Prime Minister
Mr. George Brown, Foreign Secretary
Mr. Douglas Jay, President of the Board of Trade
Mr. Fred Peart, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries
and Food
Sir Con O'Neill, Deputy Under-Secretary, Foreign Office
Sir Arthur Snelling, Deputy Under-Secretary,
Commonwealth Relations Office
Mr. Bill Hughes, Deputy Under-Secretary,
Board of Trade
Mr. Fred Kearns, Under-Secretary, Ministry of
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Mr. D. H. Andrew, Private Secretary in the
Prime Minister's Office

The Taoiseach was received by Mr. Wilson at the door of No. 10 Downing Street at 1 p.m. and as soon as all the guests had arrived immediately proceeded to lunch. The lunch was a working one and the discussions continued at the luncheon table after the meal was over until all the business had been disposed of. The atmosphere was informal and friendly and no effort was made to cut short discussion. In the interests of promoting free discussion the Irish side produced no papers and

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made no notes at the meeting. The Prime Minister's Private Secretary made notes of the multilateral discussion which commenced towards the end of the meal. In view of the earlier indications that the discussion would be tete-a-tete it was surprising to find so many senior British Ministers and officials present - this was probably due to some extent to the fact that the meeting had commenced with a luncheon. Mr. Brown, the British Foreign Secretary, had to leave before the end of the meeting as he was due to face a barrage of questions in the House of Commons. The meeting concluded at 3.40 p.m.

EEC

Mr. Wilson opened the general discussion towards the end of the luncheon by asking Mr. Brown to give an account of his recent meeting with President de Gaulle. Mr. Brown indicated that he had first met the French Foreign Minister, M. Couve de Murville, who had been so aloof and uncommunicative that Mr. Brown suggested that perhaps he was talking to the wrong man. This led to the invitation to meet General de Gaulle. Although unexpected, such a meeting was not unnatural, as General de Gaulle had already received German Foreign Minister Brandt, U.S. Secretary of State Rusk and the Italian Foreign Minister Fanfani. Mr. Brown said that he found the General courteous but not very helpful or oncoming, although at one point in their discussion he detected a strongly emotional reaction from the General to something he had said to him (not disclosed to us). The General gave him 70 minutes of his time. Put crudely, the General's line was "What do you want?", "What is your problem?". "I have no problem", "I am not trying to get into the Common Market". Mr. Brown was not prepared in reply to spell out the British position in detail at this stage of their pre-negotiation probing. From his ensuing discussion with "Mon G.", as he

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He mentioned his earlier representations to Mr. Callaghan, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in September last and expressed the hope that restrictions might be relaxed in respect of Ireland as soon as possible. Mr. Wilson indicated that he appreciated the difficulties which the restrictions might create for Ireland but, unfortunately, the restrictions were needed to enable Britain to pull out of her present economic difficulties and could not, therefore, be relaxed until this had been achieved.

Relations with Northern Ireland

The Taoiseach referred to the Irish Government's policy of offering the maximum possible measure of cooperation with the Northern Government in practical matters of public concern for the mutual advantage of people living in both parts of Ireland. He affirmed that it was his intention to continue this policy initiated by his predecessor, Mr. Lemass. He also intended to ensure, insofar as it may be possible, that provocative statements would not be made by official spokesmen which would render more difficult the establishment of better relations with the North.

The Taoiseach indicated at the same time that he was anxious that everything possible should be done to get rid of the discriminatory practices in the North in such matters as the franchise, housing and employment, as these practices contribute largely to the bitterness and strife which have existed. The Taoiseach recognised that some progress was contemplated as announced in the recent Queen's Speech on the opening of the Stormont Parliament. The proposals announced were for a limited measure of electoral reform insofar as the Stormont Parliament was concerned but did not touch the most serious problem of reform in the Local Government franchise which is what makes possible many of the discriminatory practices, especially in housing. The Taoiseach gave as an example the figures for

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Derry to show the distortion of representation which is made possible by the present arrangements. He also referred to the discrimination against Nationalists in the matter of employment both at the Stormont and at the Local Government level. He urged that anything that could be done to reduce or remove this discrimination in the franchise, housing and employment would contribute much to a reduction of tension in the North and improved relations all round. Mr. Wilson, who had earlier adverted to Captain O'Neill's difficulties with the Reverend Ian Paisley, said that he had difficulties much nearer home insofar as his position within his own Party and Cabinet was none too secure. Captain O'Neill advanced this as a reason for not making greater or more rapid progress. While Mr. Wilson made no promises, it seemed clear that he was sympathetic to the Taoiseach's representations in this matter.

After a brief reference to the fields in which there was co-operation with the North, Sir Arthur Snelling suggested that it might be helpful if we made more significant gestures in the matter of tariff reductions vis-a-vis Northern goods as the Stormont Government were a little disappointed in the degree to which special concessions had been granted so far.

The Taoiseach stated that he had already indicated publicly his desire to continue co-operation with the North and his willingness to meet Captain O'Neill whenever this might be mutually convenient.

Cyprus and the Financing of UN Peace-keeping

The Taoiseach referred to our participation in the UN peace-keeping force in Cyprus and the heavy expenditure we had incurred which had not yet been reimbursed. The system of voluntary financing of such operations is far from satisfactory and the Minister for External Affairs had been urging in the United Nations that the financing of such operations should be

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Communiqué

On the Taoiseach indicating that he had no further subjects to raise an Irish draft communiqué, Appendix A, and a British draft communiqué, Appendix B, were considered. It was agreed to marry the two contexts and the communiqué, Appendix C, was settled.

General

At the conclusion of the discussions the Taoiseach assured Mr. Wilson of his desire to continue to pursue the policy of his predecessor, Mr. Lemass, in seeking to promote closer and friendlier co-operation between the two countries. He expressed a special word of appreciation of the personal interest which Mr. Wilson had taken in Anglo-Irish affairs and he expressed the hope that Mr. Wilson and his Ministers would continue to take this helpful and friendly interest in relations between the two countries. Mr. Wilson expressed his pleasure in working with the Taoiseach in this matter and looked forward to further meetings.

In the course of the discussions the possibility of Mr. Wilson paying a visit to Ireland had been lightly touched upon. Mr. Wilson gave the impression that he would be happy to make such a visit but no commitments were entered into on either side.

Mr. Wilson accompanied the Taoiseach to the door of No. 10 Downing Street and willingly posed for photographs at the conclusion of what had obviously been a friendly and constructive meeting.

APPENDIX CCommuniqué

The Taoiseach, Mr. J. Lynch, today met Mr. Harold Wilson, British Prime Minister, for their first meeting since Mr. Lynch became Taoiseach. On the British Side the Foreign Secretary, the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food were also present.

A number of matters of interest to both countries were reviewed. The two leaders discussed, among other things, Anglo-Irish trade, developments in Britain's relations with the EEC and the prospects for a nuclear non-dissemination agreement.

The discussion covered also political matters including those currently arising in the framework of the United Nations.

The talks took place in a friendly atmosphere.
Mr. Lynch returns to Dublin tonight.