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Mr Waddy

17 Grosvenor Place
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Taoiseach!
per may wish
to see

5 OCT 1977

IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

Confidential

3rd October 1977

Dear Bob

As you will appreciate it was not possible to take notes at the lunch for Mrs Thatcher and so much of the ground in it was covered by remarks made by the Taoiseach on other occasions that it is difficult to isolate as occurring at the lunch everything that he said. Because of this I think it would be unwise for me to attempt to detail the conversation. In spite of this it would be well to put on record a number of salient points and this is what I am attempting to do in this letter.

As we have already told you the lunch was a relaxed and cordial affair which enabled the Taoiseach to get to know Mrs Thatcher and Airey Neave. They welcomed the occasion and were anxious to make the meeting constructive and the basis for future good relations. Since this was also our objective the Taoiseach's attitude was also oncoming.

The meeting was basically a briefing by the Taoiseach on the points he had made to Callaghan and the reaction of Callaghan to them. It was also an occasion to clarify the new Government's policies with regard to the eventual aspirations for unity, the need for an economic initiative and the need for a political initiative. The Taoiseach also outlined the present state of play with regard to the renewal of the legal provisions for detention for seven days. I shall revert to this last point later. Of course the Taoiseach was anxious to ascertain Mrs. Thatcher's views on questions such as power-sharing and its here that the most interesting exchanges occurred. He explained to her Mr Callaghan's views about devolved government and the need to avoid upsetting the Unionists by the use of the actual term "power sharing" at this juncture. He then said that he took it that the Tory party would continue to support the Labour Government in this

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the end (P 3 & 4)
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matter to which Mrs. Thatcher replied "support it; why it was our initiative!" She then confirmed that her party's views had not changed. This I think is an important point to make in view of Anne McHardy's report in today's Guardian (30th September) on which we have been in contact with the Department already. Airey Neave's broadcast has also made the Conservative position more explicit than they would otherwise have wished.

In this matter, however, it may be necessary to take into account an exchange I had separately with him later. He made the point which all British officials and politicians have been making to us recently and that is that power-sharing has become so loaded with political undertones that it is a word they do not wish to be tagged with. It would be most desirable to have some other formula which would not alarm the Unionists in the same way. I replied to this that as one reassured the Unionists one tended to frighten the SDLP and for us the use of the word power-sharing was important. We appreciated their difficulty about its use in the context of talks between Mrs Thatcher and the Taoiseach and would not wish to embarrass them but the difficulty remained. I asked him would they be happy if we said that their attitude had not changed and he expressed unease about this and indicated that he would prefer some phrase such as a desire to look for a compromise solution for devolved government. He mentioned his anxiety about power-sharing to the Minister and to the Taoiseach and it was decided afterwards on the Irish side that we would not refer to it in any press briefings about the meeting. The Taoiseach however was satisfied that Mrs Thatcher had confirmed that her attitude to power-sharing as an objective had not changed though obviously there might have to be intermediary stages involving power-sharing that were less than a final solution. In the event as indicated in the last paragraph Neave was forced by events to confirm that there had been no change in policy.

Mrs Thatcher indicated most firmly that she was opposed

to integration. This occurred during a discussion on steps in this direction and the Speakers' Conference.

Both Mrs Thatcher and Mr Neave underlined strongly the need for the SDLP to continue in operation and expressed goodwill to the party. The Taoiseach while explaining his sympathy for the SDLP made it clear that he was in no way a spokesman for the party. He also explained the difficulties that the SDLP members faced in staying in politics and Mrs Thatcher expressed considerable concern and sympathy for their financial difficulties. Both of the Tory leaders also showed an appreciation of the dangers that arose from the lack of any political institution in the North and were much more open than British Ministers to the need for political initiatives.

Mrs Thatcher welcomed the moves towards economic cooperation and the Taoiseach and the Minister explained to her the possible areas where this cooperation could be developed.

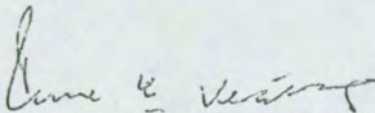
No complaint was made by either Mrs Thatcher or Mr Neave about security cooperation and this did not loom large in the discussion. This area indeed was largely occupied by the Taoiseach's exposition of the position with regard to the detention clause. Mr Neave was reassured by the information that there would in any case be provision in our legislation for detention for 48 hours after arrest and before charging and he appeared quite satisfied with this.

It emerged during the talk that Mrs Thatcher has never been in Ireland. The Minister indicated to Mr Neave that we would be happy to welcome her whenever she would like to come and the Taoiseach had already said that he hoped she would come some day. Mr Neave has given me the impression that she would not be adverse to an invitation.

Apart from the North there was some discussion about EEC matters. Mrs Thatcher was, I felt, somewhat lukewarm in her enthusiasm for the Community and indicated that she would not care greatly if the direct-election timetable was not met. She indicated indeed that personally she preferred the present system where representatives are sent from national parliaments since this gave parties a greater element of control. She is also opposed to extension of the European Assembly's powers. All in all her attitude in this is very close to Mr. Callaghan's and shows a strong nationalist rather than European bent.

The meeting unfortunately had to end at about twenty minutes to three. We had already heard that they would have to leave at two-thirty. At the time of their departure it was obvious that both sides would have been glad of the opportunity to continue the talks somewhat longer in order to understand each others' viewpoint better but this was a sign of the satisfactory nature of the encounter rather than a sign of its failure.

Yours sincerely



Ambassador

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Dublin 2.