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Statement in Dail Eireann
by the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, T.D.,
on Meeting with British Prime Minister,
the Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher M.P.
on Monday, 7th November, 1983.

I propose, a Cheann Comhairle, to make a statement on the meeting with the British Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, in Chequers on 7 November, attended, on the Irish side by the Tanaiste, Mr. Dick Spring, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Peter Barry. The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, Q.C., M.P., and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. James Prior, M.P.

I have arranged to have laid before the House a copy of the communique issued after the meeting which includes, by way of annex, a Joint Report of the Steering Committee of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council and a review of activity in relation to the Anglo-Irish Joint Studies, since November 1981.

The meeting took place in three parts. There was, first of all, a tete-a-tete between the Prime Minister and myself, which lasted for almost two hours. Simultaneously the Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs met with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Following these separate meetings the entire group

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met in plenary session. The discussions continued over a working lunch.

The Tánaiste, Minister and I also had meetings with Mr. Kinnock, Leader of the Labour Party, Dr. Owen, Leader of the Social Democratic Party and Mr. Steel, Leader of the Liberal Party. At these meetings, we discussed matters of common concern, particularly the situation in Northern Ireland and recent and pending developments in the European Communities.

In brief, our discussions with the Prime Minister related to Northern Ireland and other bilateral issues, the European Community and international affairs. The principal purpose of the meeting was to ^{improve} develop and deepen the relationship which I had originally developed some years ago. There have already been thirteen meetings at Ministerial level of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council since last February. There have also been three meetings each of the official Steering and Co-ordinating Committees. The documents which I have laid before the House will illustrate the range of subjects which have been dealt with through this process in the time ^{since} I have mentioned. They are a record of considerable achievement.

The discussion on Northern Ireland and bilateral issues ranged widely. I took the opportunity, as Leader of my Party, to brief the Prime Minister on the work of the Forum, as it has developed in public sessions and in the published documents,

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particularly the recent document on "The Cost of Violence Arising from the Northern Ireland Situation Since 1969". I have been most careful not to pre-empt in any way the conclusions of the Forum to whose freedom of deliberation and action I attach very considerable importance.

During our discussions, I stressed to the Prime Minister the very real dangers arising from the sense of alienation from the institutions of Government on the part of a large minority of the population in Northern Ireland. I urged the necessity for deep and urgent reflection on how this might be tackled.

We both recognised that the challenge to our Governments is very simply to ask ourselves together - in the interests of peace and stability in this island and of relations between this country and Britain - not what we want, but what workable arrangements can we devise together which will give to the people of Northern Ireland what they want and what they need. Their fundamental requirement is for stability and order. The test of any solution must be that it be realistic and answer the basic need for identification by the people with the institutions of Government which is the very basis of society.

We discussed the problems facing the European Community, both at the tete-a-tete and at the plenary sessions. The forthcoming European Council in Athens will be of crucial importance to the Community, which, as Deputies know, is approaching the limit of the "Own Resources" system of

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financing, and therefore finds itself inhibited not only in developing new policies but even in administering the policies which form its very foundation. We discussed the growth in total spending of the Community and the various proposals for dealing with future financing problems.

I stressed to the Prime Minister the vital importance of increasing the Community's resources and the unsatisfactory nature of current proposals ^{from the Common} which would limit the increase in these resources to a figure likely to be exhausted in a short period of years. The whole problem would then, of course, again have to come before the entire Community in the type of confrontational way which has been visibly so damaging. I am not suggesting that the British Government has the same perspective on this problem but they do, at least, now know our view on it.

In relation to the Common Agricultural Policy I explained very clearly the nature of the burdens which the proposed superlevy would impose on the Irish economy and the fundamental damage it would do if implemented. This would do, proportionately, to our country many times the damage that would have been done to other countries by measures which have, in recent years, occupied a great deal of the Community's time - and which the Community has found it essential to ameliorate. The Community cannot function if it seeks to impose on its members solutions which those members find unacceptable.

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In passing, I should perhaps comment that the proposal of the Greek Presidency with respect to the superlevy, while it recognises the existence of a special Irish problem, will not in its present form be acceptable to the Irish Government. We shall be seeking a derogation from the proposed superlevy.

The progress with the negotiations for enlargement of the Community to include Spain and Portugal and the financial and political consequences were also discussed in some detail. Finally, I took the opportunity of raising with the Prime Minister briefly the operation of the European Monetary System.

The Tanaiste, at the meeting with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, expressed Irish concern in relation to discharges from the nuclear reprocessing plant at Windscale. This matter is shortly to be the subject of a special enquiry by the British Government and they have noted our concern.

In relation to international affairs, we had a substantial discussion on the situation in the Lebanon and also discussed the problems throughout the Caribbean and Central America.

I went to London, with the objective that we should lay the foundation for dialogue on ways and means to achieve peace and stability in Northern Ireland - in the interests of this island and of a constructive and friendly relationship between the peoples of our two countries. I believe that this objective was achieved.