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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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From:

TAOISEACH'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN,
WHITEHOUSE, 16th MARCH, 1984.

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The President was accompanied by Mr. Schultz, Secretary of State, Mr. Regan, Secretary, of the Treasury, Ambassador Kane, Assistant Secretary Burt and others. The Taoiseach was accompanied by the Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador O'Sullivan, and the undersigned. The meeting began at 11.40 a.m. approx. after the usual arrangements for television, photographing etc. It concluded just under a half an hour later and was followed by a brief meeting between the President and the Taoiseach, and lunch.

After the usual exchanges, the President opened with an enquiry to the Taoiseach as to whether he had any words to say. The Taoiseach said that he would like to talk about the situation in Northern Ireland, and, in particular, the work of the Forum. He said that he hoped that this would provide the basis for discussion with the British Government who are deeply concerned with what is happening. He hoped for a constructive outcome.

The President said that what was happening there was all, ostensibly, happening in the name of God, but it was the same God. Was there any chance that a majority of the people there could get together. Was the position that each side was simply been/intimidated by its own radical groups? He remembered some years ago the spontaneous outburst of feeling which had followed the "peace women". The Taoiseach agreed with the President. There had been a massive movement in the early 1970s. Politicians of every persuasion had tried to work together within the constraints of the double majority/minority situation, but there had been great pressures. Paisley had tremendous ability to raise fears and passion. The particular result then had exacerbated sectarianism in the North.

The President then went on to say that insofar as investment in Ireland was concerned, he would do everything possible to support and encourage it. The Taoiseach thanked the President for his good wishes and said that approximately half of all foreign investment and one sixth/seventh of the total manufacturing labour force was due to American firms locating in Ireland. There was a particularly warm welcome there for them. In fact, the only sort of friction that he had experienced, in relation to this type of investment, was the tension which might arise as between different localities, in competition for a particular factory. Americans were not regarded as foreigners. The sort of investment they produced, in the high technology area, was particularly valuable. We seemed to have a facility for

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computer operations. In fact, in his experience, a number of American factories which had set up in Ireland, in this area, were now experiencing a brain drain as Irish programmers, workers and managers, left the country to go to Head Offices in the States. He was particularly conscious of certain American concerns in relation to security aspects of this investment. It was the intention of the Irish Government to work very closely with the Americans on this. In fact, the controls they operated on technological exports were just as tight as those operated by the CoCom countries, even though Ireland was not a member of that organisation. The Taoiseach went on to tell the President of experiences with the foundation and development of the Russian Embassy in Dublin. He said that the diplomatic staff permitted - i.e. five diplomats and twelve others - had not changed since the Embassy had been set up in the 1970s.

The President said that he appreciated Ireland's attitude. Insofar as the Arms Reductions talks were concerned, the basic question was whether the answer was to be peace or war. The answer just had got to be peace. The Taoiseach said that he welcomed the President's sentiments. Arms limitation was very important in the present state of the world.

The President then went on to say that he had heard from Chancellor Kohl of his experience at the funeral of Mr. Andropov. The Russians, on that occasion, adopted the traditional practice of having the dead man in an open casket for some time, with an opportunity for mourners to pass by. Mrs. Andropov when she passed the casket was seen openly blessing herself. The President wondered if religion was about to take a hand in the development of Russian society. Its spread had become particularly notable about young people. The Taoiseach referred to Mr. Kruschev and said that religion was part of the tradition of the Russian people. The President then mentioned Mr. Chou En Lai who on one occasion had included in a speech a reference to "when I meet my Maker". When the audience expressed surprise at this he had come back with the question - "who do you think I mean - Karl Marx?" The President then went on to refer to some guests who would be appearing at the lunch, in particular, a Father Hasberg(?) of Notre Dame, who was a particularly impressive man. He had told him a story recently about the Notre Dame team, which the President recounted. The Taoiseach mentioned that his own father had been visiting Professor of Philosophy to Notre Dame - and of the consequences of his work there, for his parliamentary career.

The President then went on to refer to the situation in Central America. He said that all the evidence in Nicaragua

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seemed to indicate that the people who wanted to carry out promises of democracy had been ousted. Some were now leading the contra forces. The President then went on to refer to President Somoza and to the attempts to overthrow the El Salvador Government. References had been made to the fact that a first foothold had now been established on the mainland of a marxist State. Not a single promise had been kept insofar as labour unions, democracy, freedom of the individual etc. were concerned. The revolution there was been supported by the Soviets and by Cuba. The Americans had full evidence of a Bill of Lading for a particular ship, showing that it was carrying military helicopters. The Nicaraguan Government had promised to allow full access to the ship on the docks, so as to prove the contrary to any press who were curious. When the time came the only press they allowed on the docks were Cubans. Even Congressmen who had gone to the country with other ideas had come back totally converted. In fact, one of them who had spoken to a high official in the Government had been told that the revolution would be "at your Southern borders in a year" What was happening there was been openly described as "revolution" without frontiers". The Government there was openly trying to spread Communism throughout the hemisphere.

The situation in Southern America was not by any means ideal and he did not want to give the impression that any particular grouping there was on the side of the angels. In many places there were military dictatorships and oligarchies which he found it very difficult to accept. The spread of democracy everywhere in the area was been supported by the Americans. Economic aid was now equivalent to about three quarters of all American aid given there. They did not, however, wish to see change being used to establish marxist Communism. He was particularly distressed by the sort of media reporting which was going on. The President then went on to recount a story of leftist guerilla activity and atrocity which, he said, was well known over a wide area but which had not received any publicity whatsoever in the media. On the otherhand, any sort of deviant activity by the anti-Communist forces was reported and broadcast with the greatest alacrity.

The Taoiseach said that in relation to the setting up of the Irish State in the 1920s one particular principle had been followed which he thought had helped to guarantee its existence - and lead to the sort of relationship which now existed with Britain. In other words, every Government since the Irish State was founded, had followed the fundamental principle that Ireland must never be used as a base for attacking Britain.

At this point, the meeting concluded.

cc. Mr. Sean Donlon, Secretary,
Department of Foreign Affairs.

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23rd March, 1984.

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