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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

SECRET

EUROPEAN COUNCIL, DUBLIN CASTLE, 3/4 DECEMBER, 1984.

Taoiseach's meeting with Mrs. Thatcher

1. The meeting began at 7.00 p.m. and concluded at approximately 7.15 p.m. It was attended by the Prime Minister and her Private Secretary, Mr. Charles Powell. The undersigned attended with the Taoiseach.

2. The Prime Minister - Germany, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands are absolutely firm on the IMPS question. Greece was already getting a great deal of protection out of Enlargement.

Taoiseach: I am pleased with the way the wine discussion has gone. Italy supports France.

Prime Minister: in the Anglo-Irish area, I am doing everything I can. I have been smiling all day! What we should try to do is to get a new framework. We have said that we would meet early in the New Year and we will do this. However, your chum, John Hume, is not making things easy. He has reacted in such a hostile way in the Commons that I am almost driven to wonder whether there is any point in trying to get a solution to the problem.

Taoiseach: he went on afterwards in a very supporting way, on the subject of that press conference.

Prime Minister: I thought that the press conference had been all sweetness and light.

Taoiseach: thanks for opening and going on, generally, on the lines we agreed at Chequers. There were, however, two questions which had caused very serious damage. The first was the matter in which some answers had been given. That had a very profound effect.

Prime Minister: But we had said at least three times before that the three options in the Forum were not on. On the subject of alienation, I appreciate that the replies could have had a serious psychological impact.

Taoiseach: Jim Prior had not ruled out the third option quite as definitely as you did at the press conference. The Forum had much in it as well as the three options. What we must try to do is to get to some framework to end estrangement or disaffection or whatever the term should be to describe the situation. I appreciate the semantic difficulty involved in the word alienation. But when you rejected the concept in the way you did, you made people believe that you are rejecting the whole idea. Thanks for the letter you sent me

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afterwards. That expressed the situation well.

Prime Minister: We must emphasise the search for a new political framework and hope that we can be successful. We are going to work on it very seriously. On alienation - that was so obviously a problem that we didn't even need to state it. At the press conference, I was asked a direct question: I gave a direct answer. That is my way.

Taoiseach: I appreciate that fully. I do not think that you were trying to be contentious. Everything else, apart from these two points, at the press conference, was quite positive. People who had seen the television recording afterwards were all in agreement with that.

Prime Minister: could they not take the thing as a whole? There is a warmth about a personal appearance which may disappear in the flatness of a television screen or recording.

Taoiseach: I had to go on to my press conference not knowing what you had said in the latter part of your conference or in what context. Radio Laser had interfered with reception in the Embassy making it impossible for us to know exactly what was being said. The result was that I gave the worst press conference I have ever given in my whole life. I was uncertain about what was happening at your conference. The result was a striking contrast between your conference and mine. That contrast had a pretty large effect on myself and on the Government here. We should not try to minimise that effect or the effect on Anglo-Irish affairs generally.

Prime Minister: but you had someone at the press conference - what we must say now is that we intend to try to find a political framework acceptable to both communities; we are going to work at this; and we are going to meet early in the New Year as we always said we would. I will describe this discussion as friendly.

Taoiseach: could you include in your commentary a recognition of the problem of the minority in Northern Ireland.

Prime Minister: that is an obvious problem.

Taoiseach: look for some phrase like the fact that the minority did not easily (or fully) accept authority in Northern Ireland and looked to the Republic -

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Prime Minister: I am frightened to death of saying anything about Nationalists in Northern Ireland. We must stick to the line that there is a problem, which is very obvious; that we are working on it, as I have indicated; and we are going to meet again, as we said we would, early in the New Year.

Taoiseach: I will be making a speech sometime next week in which, I would hope, to deal with the whole situation.

At this point, 7.15 p.m., the meeting broke up.

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10th December, 1984.

cc. Mr. Sean Donlon, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs (will you convey to Noel Dorr please)
Mr. Michael Lillis, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs.