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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

SECRET

PERSONAL

Northern Ireland

The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister met from approximately 8.35 to 9.05 a.m. in the Kirchberg Building, Luxembourg. The Prime Minister was accompanied by her Private Secretary, Charles Powell. The Taoiseach was accompanied by the undersigned. These notes are in the form of direct speech but they do not purport to reproduce precisely what was said. The meeting opened with some discussion of developments in the Council, with a brief explanation by the Taoiseach of a point of particular difficulty for us. It then went on, as follows, on Northern Ireland.

Prime Minister: I am very worried about developments. You have all the glory. We have all the problems. The Unionists' reaction has been much worse than expected. Even the Alliance say that Paisley and Molyneaux are articulating the popular feeling they are getting. They are saying "supposing I don't get the agreement on security" what happens? We must have visible evidence of movement in their favour. We must have a visible security presence on the border.

Taoiseach: It is very important that we go ahead as planned. We cannot let threats or menaces now throw us off course. At the same time I agree that we must take steps to detach moderate Unionists from what is happening. There is evidence of this already. Recently I met two groups of Unionists. I am convinced from these meetings and other information that we will bring them round.

Prime Minister: They will not speak. They dare not speak. We must have visible action on security. Can you ratify the Convention on Terrorism? The people concerned are angry now that we didn't go ahead with the possibility of constitutional change.

Taoiseach: We must try to change the attitude of Unionists. We must communicate with them. You will recall a journalist at Hillsborough who made a speech against

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you instead of asking questions. I had him and three other Unionist journalists with me in Dublin for lunch. They went away from the meeting with ideas very different from those they came in with.

Prime Minister: Yes but they won't say anything. Unionists are going into by-elections now. We are not going to stop or interfere with them in any way. We must have three things. 1. Political action. Can John Hume help here? 2. Action on the Convention. 3. Convictions of more IRA men.

Taoiseach: Can you give me evidence on which to charge more of them? If there is evidence against anybody there are channels through which it can be communicated and action will be taken.

Prime Minister: If we have evidence we will get it to you. People in the South come to the North to commit criminal acts and then dash back. That is what I said to the Americans, when the Israelis bombed Tunis. What would you say if Dundalk were bombed to stop this?

Taoiseach: We have no evidence against people in Dundalk - if we had we would arrest them. For example, the evidence I have is that escapers from the Maze are not in Ireland. I am told that some of them are in Scotland.

Prime Minister: In the Irish community in Glasgow?

Taoiseach: My evidence is not as precise as that. We acted in the McGlinchey case on what your people said was evidence. Even though McGlinchey had committed criminal acts in our country and we had evidence against him. You know what happened there.

Prime Minister: We must do something about the Unionists.

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- Taoiseach: The letter from Sir Robin Bailey, a former Minister, in the Irish Times, recently is an example of the way moderate Unionists are starting to speak.....
- Prime Minister: The Police meeting yesterday was very good. Can we follow up with action on the Convention?
- *Prime Minister was referring to Intergovernmental Conference Some Unionists are furious at what has been done. They will be furious if *we meet in Stormont. Aldergrove is the only place - or possibly London. On this, we have got to take the advice of the security people. The Unionist reaction is very much more serious than I had thought.
- Taoiseach: The important thing is to detach the moderate Unionists.
- Prime Minister: Yes - but to do that we have got to get results.
- Taoiseach: Changes is already evident on the ground. They by-elections could provide an opportunity for this to appear in concrete form. In Armagh, Seamus Mallon could well succeed. South Down is less clean-cut. There is a possible difficulty in Mid-Ulster, because there is an argument about vote splitting as between Sinn Fein and the SDLP. We will do everything we can to make the Agreement work. You know that before signing the Agreement I had legal advice that I should not sign the Convention on Terrorism before I had legislation on the subject. The issue is quite complex. I am looking at it again to see if there is any possibility that I can sign first and then legislate. If so, we will need to consider very carefully what is the best time to move on this.
- Prime Minister: The important thing is to reassure Unionists before the by-elections.

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Taoiseach: We will certainly take into account your advice on timing. The Police Chief meeting yesterday is a first sign of one of the things the Agreement deals with.

Prime Minister: Yes, I appreciate that. What about John Hume? He said they would sit down and talk of devolution. Can anything happen there?

Taoiseach: They want devolution. There is little for them to do unless they get a role, which the Agreement does not give them immediately. They are strongly motivated in the direction of devolution....

Prime Minister: John Hume made an excellent speech and as you know I congratulated him on it but what we need is action.

Taoiseach: I will be meeting a delegation from the SDLP later this week - quietly, and without publicity. I will talk to them and see what they think. They are a party in their own right and must make up their own minds.

Prime Minister: I have been told: you are treacherous: you have betrayed us, etc. I have got to reassure the Unionists and fast. After the by-elections what? They have been acting constitutionally up to this. Will there be strikes or violence? Could you think of Article 2 again?

Taoiseach: The SDLP are strongly motivated towards participation but as you know, a Constitutional change could be divisive.

Prime Minister: You have got the glory and I have got the problems. My own Parliamentary Private Secretary (Ian Gow) resigned. Some of my own party will go over to Northern Ireland and campaign in the by-elections.

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Taoiseach: There is a groundswell among moderate Unionists. I recognise that they feel they have been let down and want reassurance.

Prime Minister: There is nothing they can bring down. I am deeply upset about the betrayal charges. The trouble is they will hear only what they want to hear. There is no good saying things in an English voice. Irish voices must come in and help. They have heard "this is the nearest thing we could get to joint authority". However, I suppose that showed that you have not got joint authority.

Taoiseach: That phrase was used in answer to a question early on and was taken out of context. It is notable that nobody in the South has said "this is a step towards a United Ireland". We had a debate in the Dail over three days and nobody said that. There was no triumphalism.

Prime Minister: Could we use that? Go through the debates and see if anything emerges (to Powell) (and thinking aloud) but then they will say that you do not need to say anything about a United Ireland because it is all in the Constitution. It is all there.

Taoiseach: Do they not recognise a binding Agreement on their status? There can be no change.....

Prime Minister: But there is a review clause.

Taoiseach: Put in on the suggestion of your people..... and anyway the review clause cannot affect Article 1.

We now have a position where two-thirds or three-quarters of the population of the South openly support the Agreement with its assurance on status.

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Prime Minister: The Unionists are saying that there are no visible results. I have been only too relieved that they reacted constitutionally. There have been no strikes and no bombs.

Taoiseach: The IRA are, on our information, under-financed and under-equipped now.

There then followed some exchanges on security items affecting ransoms, sources of IRA funds, etc.

Taoiseach: A passage had been considered during the negotiations for perhaps a speech by Tom King at the end of the debate in the Commons, in which he would indicate the possibility of relief for prisoners if there were a sustained period of reduced violence after the Agreement.

Prime Minister: That would be dynamite - no, not dynamite, nuclear. We could not think of relief for people guilty of bombing, of murder and other atrocities.

Taoiseach: Support for Sinn Fein is falling. If we can work on the families, we can develop this trend. It is the only way ultimately to stop them.

Prime Minister: I have to look to those by-elections.

Taoiseach: The Agreement has already caused a visible swing from Sinn Fein towards the SDLP.

The unionism of the Unionists is the best card you can play.

Prime Minister: But what is it leading them to? It is leading them to something different from the Union.

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Taoiseach: Relatives I have in Northern Ireland are Unionists. They all believe in the Union. This belief will in time counter the moves of Paisley and Molyneaux in another direction.

Prime Minister: He and Enoch and leading the treachery and betrayal charge. They say the SDLP knew everything: the Unionists knew nothing.

This is not to say that we could ever have got into discussions with them. Does anyone really think that if we had, we could have got the Agreement? At the same time we must now let the Unionists know what is going on and involve them. What about a Parliamentary report every three months on the decisions of the Intergovernmental Conference?

Powell: You cannot talk about decisions - not decisions.

Taoiseach: The communique speaks of certain things to be announced after the Conference, on perhaps, task forces, the UDR, code of conduct, etc.

Prime Minister: We have to be very careful in all this. We have to involve them in some way

Taoiseach: Yes, Some methods involving consultation seem desirable. What had you got in mind in your letter to Cushnahan?

Prime Minister: Is John Hume going into the Assembly?

Taoiseach: That is a difficult decision for them. They were elected on the basis of not going into the Assembly. If they do so now, before an election, they would be accused of breaking from election promises and taking seats for money. They may well fight the next election

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on some basis involving the Assmebly
or devolution.

Prime Minister: It is now five past nine. We will have
to consider how to consult the
Unionists. What are we going to say
to the press?

An agreed speaking note as attached, emerged following
some discussion on drafting.

OK

3rd December, 1985.

c.c. Tanaiste,
Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Attorney General,
Mr. A. Ward, Secretary, Department of Justice,
Mr. S. Donlon, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs
(for transmission as appropriate within the Department).