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PRIME MINISTER/MR REYNOLDS - DOORSTEP - LONDON - 26 FEBRUARY 1992

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TRANSCRIPT OF DOORSTEP INTERVIEW
GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR JOHN MAJOR
AND MR ALBERT REYNOLDS
IN LONDON
ON WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 1992

MR REYNOLDS:

First of all I want to say how appreciative I am of the early visit to No 10, my first time here, to renew acquaintances with an old friend of mine when we worked together in Europe.

I want to say that we both have a shared objective in trying to work towards achieving peace in the North of Ireland and to create a better way of life for all our people on the island of Ireland. We will use every possible cooperation and indeed every legitimate means at our disposal to try and stop the cruelty and carnage that is the North of Ireland over recent weeks.

I have an investment in the trust and understanding that we have built up to continue on that road to try and find between us a better way forward.

Thank you, Prime Minister.

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PRIME MINISTER:

Taoiseach, thank you very much. Perhaps I can welcome the Taoiseach, I am delighted he is able to come here so soon in his Premiership and we look forward to welcoming you back on many occasions in the future.

We have had the opportunity in the last hour and a half, and will carry that forward over dinner with our colleagues later, of reviewing a wide range of matters of mutual interest both in the European Community and of course matters of bilateral interest in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

I agree, without qualification, with what the Taoiseach said a moment or so ago. There are some other matters I think that it is perhaps worthwhile to add.

We both would wish to see the three stranded talks continue as speedily as possible and see them carried through to a successful conclusion. Both of us stand by the commitments made by our predecessors in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that seems to us to be extremely important that that is fully understood. We are both determined to continue and enhance the increased security cooperation that there has been that has worked so much to the benefit of people in Ireland over recent years.

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These are matters of common concern. Nobody who has seen the misery that has been caused in Northern Ireland, particularly perhaps over the last two months or so with some of the incidents there, can fail to be moved by them. We both believe that it is necessary for us continue to look at whatever options we can to make sure that we are able to try and bring that carnage to a conclusion.

So it has been a very worthwhile introductory meeting, there are many other things that we will have to discuss. We have agreed that we will remain in close contact in the period ahead, we will certainly continue with the meetings agreed some time ago, the bilateral meetings in London and in Dublin, and we will take whatever opportunities are necessary to meet in order to discuss the problems that we both jointly face.

QUESTION:

Did you discuss constitutional matters, in particular the Irish constitutional claim on Northern Ireland and also the Government of Ireland Act?

PRIME MINISTER:

We discussed a whole range of matters, it was a very free and frank discussion, we touched on many sensitive issues like that but I am not going into any details

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QUESTION:

Mr Reynolds, are you pleased with the Supreme Court's decision?

MR REYNOLDS:

Yes, I have already said that I welcome the Supreme Court's decision from a humane point of view, it certainly takes away the uncertainty and gets rid of the legal complexities that were indeed a source of worry and burden to the family concerned and especially to the young girl concerned.

QUESTION:

... on the security front?

PRIME MINISTER:

There are none I have to announce this evening.

QUESTION:

Is there any question today of internment being discussed, are you proposing internment in Northern Ireland?

PRIME MINISTER:

You know very well the position on internment, we have made that clear, it is there to be used if necessary but I have nothing further to say about that.

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QUESTION:

Mr Molyneux has said that Strand one of the talks could begin before the General Election, he says he is optimistic, do you believe that to be the case?

PRIME MINISTER:

I very much hope that it is the case and I am delighted to hear that Mr Molyneux is saying so. At the meeting I had here with Mr Molyneux and the other Northern Ireland political leaders about a fortnight ago they agreed that they would be in touch to see whether they could resume the talks. I know that that is in hand and I am delighted to hear what you say coming from Mr Molyneux.

MR REYNOLDS:

Could I add that I was deeply appreciative of the Prime Minister's efforts in calling all the political leaders from the North of Ireland to a meeting here, it is the first time it has happened since 1976 and I am delighted to hear him say tonight that the talks will continue in the next couple of weeks.

QUESTION:

Inaudible.

PRIME MINISTER:

It depends what you mean by a break in the log-jam, I think the news just reported a moment or so ago that you heard from the questioner that the political parties in Northern Ireland think

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that it may now be possible to begin the Strand 1 talks again before the General Election, is a very encouraging development. But I do not want to talk about breaking log-jams, there is a lot to be done, a lot of patient careful continuing diplomacy will be necessary. What we have done is just begin to carry this a little further tonight.

QUESTION:

Taoiseach, will you work now to try and distance your government in the Republic from the Catholic Church, it seems they are very closely connected, will you now work to make sure that you are operating on the political framework without the church on your back all the time?

MR REYNOLDS:

I do not know where you get any evidence that the church is on my back. The special position of the Catholic Church in Ireland was removed from our constitution many years ago and I think anybody who has watched the first couple of weeks of my administration would have no doubts in that regard and I think what is important here is that the Prime Minister and myself are going to continue to keep a personal interest in the happenings in the North of Ireland and we will ensure, insofar as we can, that Strand 1, 2 and 3 continue and we are fully committed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

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QUESTION:

Will you be having a referendum on divorce and abortion in the near future?

MR REYNOLDS:

The Supreme Court decision that came out this afternoon was a decision to set aside the High Court decision of a lower court. I have not got, and nobody else has got at this stage, the details of that Supreme Court decision and consequently it would be futile to speculate on what may or may not be necessary for the future.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)