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Report on Taoiseach's Meeting with Prime Minister John Major
at Chequers on 24 October, 1994

Delegations

Irish

Mr. A. Reynolds, TD, Taoiseach
Mr. R. Spring, TD, Tánaiste

Mr. J. Small, Ambassador
Mr. S. O'hUiginn
Dr. M. Mansergh
Mr. F. Finlay

British

Mr. J. Major, MP, Prime Minister
Sir P. Mayhew, MP, Secretary of
State for Northern Ireland
Sir J. Chilcot
Mr. D. Blatherwick, Ambassador
Mr. Q. Thomas
Mr. R. Lyne

The Irish delegation arrived at Chequers at 11.00 a.m. Following a 15 minute coffee period, the Taoiseach and Prime Minister had a 45 minute private meeting, accompanied by notetakers. The Tánaiste and Sir Patrick Mayhew met separately during that period. At 12.00 noon the plenary session started and lasted for two hours, followed by lunch and a press conference. The Irish delegation left Chequers at 3.30 p.m. for the Embassy. This report deals only with the plenary meeting (12.00 noon - 2.00 p.m.) and does not purport to be a verbatim account. There was no substantive discussion of Northern Ireland matters during lunch. A list of the media interviews given by the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste at the Embassy is attached (Annex 1) as well as the Statement by the Taoiseach released to the media before the interviews commenced (Annex 2).

Opening Remarks

Prime Minister:

Suggest that we look at where we are in relation to the ceasefires, the surrender of arms, sensitive areas like cross-border authorities, Articles 2 and 3, default mechanism, the way ahead and what we say to the Press. There was now a changed atmosphere in Northern Ireland and the momentum should not be lost. It was necessary to complete the work on the Joint Framework Document and the British would have talks about talks with Sinn Féin before the end of the year. The practical security situation on the ground was positive. There was another matter that was extremely important: some of Geraldine Kennedy's stories in the Irish Times about squabbles between Dublin and London were supremely unhelpful. Anything that could be done to stop such reporting would be helpful. Arms on both sides

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would have to be surrendered and the mechanics of this would be difficult. Loyalists would not go South to give up their arms and republicans were certainly not going to hand over their semtex to Hugh Annesley. His feeling was that there would be "offers" of arms in the North. John Chilcot and Tim Dalton should meet to draw up a modus operandi. He was a realist and knew that some but not all of the arms would be handed over.

Taoiseach:

Said he had raised the arms question with Sinn Féin at their first meeting and the Tánaiste had done likewise last week. Their reply was that this is not the appropriate stage to discuss the arms issue as the Army had yet to return to barracks and there was also the question of loyalist arms. In pushing Sinn Féin/IRA towards a ceasefire we had spoken of their early entry into the political process. The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation would be up and running on Friday (28 October) and this would be evidence of movement. He realised that the Prime Minister's time-table was different and what was being done on our side was not meant to put pressure on him.

Prime Minister:

Having different time-tables was not bad. It was important to be clear on the mechanics.

Tánaiste:

Felt from the meeting with Sinn Féin that there is realism on their side in relation to the eventual handing up of arms - but that is down the line and should not be a precondition for talks.

Taoiseach:

The Loyalists are now thinking of coming forward.

J. Chilcot:

The whole question of legalities arises. Should the person handing in the arms, and indeed the arms, be excluded from further investigation? The question of the disposal of semtex and heavy weapons would have to be examined. Rifles cannot be blown up and expert advice would be

required on decommissioning. Tip-offs by telephone about arms could be expected.

Prime Minister: There may be legal problems on both sides.

Tánaiste: It would be difficult to encourage the handing up of arms if legal conditions applied.

Prime Minister: Agreed with this and said he would be prepared to defend that stance publicly. He felt it was a very tricky area.

Taoiseach: Verification is a tricky and dangerous word.

Sir P. Mayhew: There are precedents in the U.K. for amnesties.

J. Chilcot: Should cash be offered for arms?

Prime Minister: That is very difficult politically.

Tánaiste: This would be a dangerous and difficult policy to defend.

J. Chilcot: Explosives and detonators should be taken up first - then the arms held for the defence of the communities. Each side will see it has its own needs. Can this be tolerated?

Prime Minister: The reality is that all the arms will not be handed in.

M. Mansergh: The opening offer of Sinn Féin is likely to be that the IRA themselves will decommission the arms.

Sir P. Mayhew: Sufficient earnest could be shown by handing in semtex, explosives and heavy machine guns.

- M. Mansergh: The word "surrender" should be avoided: "decommission" would be a preferable term.
- J. Chilcot: Three weeks will be required for the study entrusted to him and Tim Dalton.
- Taoiseach: We will have to return to this issue. As regards the timetable for the Joint Framework Document, the sooner it is completed the better - would like to see it finished next week. What is the realistic date for publication and what about the Strand 1 document?
- Prime Minister: The two should be published together to avoid mischief-making. The British side would match the timetable for the Joint Framework Document. There would be nothing in the Strand 1 document to surprise us.
- S. O'Uiginn: It is important to know the contents of the Strand 1 draft. It is difficult to have an interlocking system without knowing the contents of that document. The problem will arise in relation to the Nationalists.
- Prime Minister: What is in the Strand 1 document will be completely in line with the Joint Framework Document - the same as what was emerging from the 1992 talks. It is true that Sinn Féin were not involved then but the proposed draft will not be an immutable blueprint.
- Sir P. Mayhew: It was agreed in 1991 that Dublin would remain outside Strand 1.
- Prime Minister: There is a huge risk involved if the British are seen to be consulting on this. They would have to be able to look them [the Unionists] in the eye and say that Dublin was not involved in the drafting. They were acutely sensitive to our needs

in that connection and would not fall into the folly of putting something forward that caused up problems. They will emphasise that the Strand 1 document is not a blueprint - is not immutable.

S. O'hUiginn:

But James Molyneux may say "I will take the Strand 1 document but not the Joint Framework Document".

Sir P. Mayhew:

John Hume wants North/South institutions of the right character and James Molyneux knows he cannot have one without the other.

Prime Minister:

All the parties in the North are under pressure to reach an accommodation. If something malign emerged, the SDLP and Sinn Féin could reject it.

Taoiseach:

We should ensure that the SDLP are fully aware of the situation. The matter should be taken up with John Hume.

Prime Minister:

With regard to the Strand 1 document, it will be quite difficult to say this is a straightforward assertion of Unionist preferences. It will not be like that at all. We will say it emerges from discussions with the Unionists, the Alliance and the SDLP.

Q. Thomas:

It would be possible to expand paragraph 16 of the Joint Framework Document draft to make more detailed references to what is envisaged in Strand 1.

Constitutional Matters

Prime Minister:

Suggest that M. Mansergh indicate where we are at.

M. Mansergh:

There are three aspects involving three separate papers:

- (1) Amendment of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution.
- (2) Amendment of British Constitutional legislation.
- (3) The wording to be used in the Joint Framework Document in relation to constitutional matters.

With regard to (1), we had defined how far the Irish side can travel - and that is a considerable distance. As to (2), draft papers have been exchanged and, as regards (3), that was only looked at on the previous week in the textual sense. The positions on that are bridgeable, perhaps after a couple of more sessions.

J. Chilcot:

Assuming (1) and (2) are possible, how do we handle the matter? Finding language for the Joint Framework Document if we have agreement on (1) and (2) is easy.

Prime Minister:

Assuming agreement this year on Articles 2 and 3 and the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, at what time is the statement of intent in the Joint Framework Document implemented? Is there a timescale for that? What happens if you don't win? We must assume that both are winable. Legislative action would be required in 1995/96.

Tánaiste:

It is hard to compress. The danger of losing momentum raises the necessity of completing the Joint Framework Document.

Prime Minister:

Yes, say by the end of the year - tomorrow, if possible. It could be said that legislation and the referendum could only come about if agreement is reached.

Comment: At this point the Prime Minister made an intriguing reference to the next British general election which, incidentally is due in or before April, 1997. He seemed to indicate that an election would be deferred as long as possible because of favourable economic trends and indicators and he mentioned in that connection sustained growth, low inflation, and the fall in unemployment. It is possible that another favourable development of a major kind was figuring in the Prime Minister's mind at this point, i.e. the resolution of the Northern Ireland problem. This is an aspect we should bear in mind in our dealings with the British, in case they seek to stretch the process to an unacceptable extent to suit the Prime Minister's election strategy].

J. Chilcot: Envisaged a threshold of, say, 70% in Northern Ireland for agreement, with the possibility of Sinn Féin and the DUP combining against.

Cross Border Institutions

Taoiseach: We must move to a position where we get maximum support from both communities. We must also try to strike a fair balance. Unionists want devolution and the Nationalists want to see a new North/South institutional framework. To get a fair deal there has to be compromise on both sides. We were not talking about joint authority.

Prime Minister: The example of tourism is a good one. North/South bodies should get their powers from the Dáil and Westminster and be accountable to the Dáil and a Northern Ireland Assembly. They should operate by consensus and there was a need to be clear on the initial range of responsibilities. The European Union dimension, however, raises problems. But until Northern Ireland joins the South, it will be necessary for the two Governments to act separately, otherwise there would be a form of joint authority and he would then be faced with the Unionists and the Euro-sceptics in his own party for whom Brussels represented the devil incarnate.

Default Mechanism

Prime Minister: The British are very sensitive to Irish concerns about a default mechanism. It is understandable that the Irish side should be worried about an agreement where the Northern Ireland Assembly does not work or where the North/South body fails. The Irish would then be stuck after changing Articles 2 and 3. The alternative cannot be joint authority. The British side are open to suggestions on this and would like to discuss.

Tánaiste: The Irish worries are not in relation to the British.

Ambassador Small: The alternative to failure should be so unattractive to the Unionists, e.g. something that had the appearance of joint authority, that it would be in their interest to work the new institutions.

Prime Minister: But that would leave it open to the SDLP not to work these institutions.

M. Mansergh: Semi-autonomous bodies could continue to operate in the event of failure.

J. Chilcot: One could envisage a reversion of power to Westminster.

Prime Minister: The British Government could stand in the shoes of the Unionists if the latter ceased to operate the North/South bodies. Could not immediately see how this would be objectionable - and this could be made a treaty commitment to avoid subsequent allegations that the wicked British walked away. Felt it was possible to find a way through this.

European Union Dimension

S. O'hUiginn: We see Europe as a very benign thing holding a high symbolic value for the Nationalists and for John Hume in

particular. We accept that the collective British interest would at times preclude action on the part of a North/South body. But allowance should be made for an all-Ireland agenda in areas where metropolitan concerns are not hurt. There were also difficulties on the Irish side but given that the European dimension is now so pervasive we should aim at finding a meaningful role for the North/South body in that area. The symbolism was very important.

Prime Minister: As far as European money is concerned, what goes to Northern Ireland is petty cash compared to the UK subsidy of £3 billion. While acknowledging the symbolic importance for John Hume, it is hard to see how the problems can be overcome.

Taoiseach: The three Northern Ireland MEP's have acted together. Agriculture, for example, is of special importance to North and South.

M. Mansergh: Would it be possible to have a Northern Ireland Minister at the table in Brussels behind the Irish Minister?

Prime Minister: This is a difficult proposition since only British and Irish Ministers can attend Council meetings.

S. O'Leary: Take, for example, animal disease and roads; is it so unthinkable that a North/South body, with the consent of the two Governments, would have a role at the preparatory stages, before final decisions are taken? It will cause enormous difficulties for the Nationalists if there is not some such role.

Tánaiste: There is a substantial EU input of money to roads in this connection.

Ambassador Blatherwick: There is a good deal of existing co-operation between North and South.

Taoiseach: It is the process leading up to decision-making where a North/South body can have an input.

Prime Minister: Instead of a North/South body having clear-cut responsibility for responding to opportunities in an E.U. context, could one have such a body advising the two Governments on possibilities and opportunities?

M. Mangerqh: Why not have someone from the North sitting behind an Irish Minister in Brussels?

S. O'hUiginn: We have made suggestions on harmonising but got a very negative response.

Prime Minister: We will have a further look at this.

Articles 2 & 3

Prime Minister: From what has been said already, we seem to be within a couple of drafting sessions of reaching agreement. What procedure is envisaged? Will the amendments be put on the table? What about the Government of Ireland Act? We are not trying to slip away from that. Have the Irish withdrawn the territorial claim and do they regard British rule in Northern Ireland as legitimate? The British side realise this is a difficult question.

Taoiseach: On balance the Unionists are doing rather better from the emerging package. They are getting a withdrawal of the constitutional claim, consolidation of the peace process and, of course, devolution. The Nationalists stand to gain a sharing of power and a recognition of their identity.

Prime Minister: What about the North/South body and the possibility of movement towards a united Ireland? Feel it is a good balance. No doubt about the problem in relation to Articles 2 & 3. A North/South body will be seen by some as the slippery slope.

- Taoiseach: On any objective analysis the balance comes down very much in favour of the Unionists.
- Prime Minister: The Unionists would happily sit as they are. They are in possession - in the UK - why upset this? We agreed long ago that what was happening in Northern Ireland was intolerable. We are now engaged in a process to try and improve things.
- Taoiseach: We should not get into a process we are not sure of. Apart from the question of how far I can bring my own party, we will not bring the Nationalists with us unless we get the constitutional aspects right. We have got to recognise the problem of their identity.
- Prime Minister: Let the officials continue their work on the drafting of the Joint Framework Document. When do we have a Summit? Privately the British side would welcome one immediately.
- J. Chilcot: The Secretary of State and the Tanaiste should, perhaps, meet for a day and go through the draft line by line. There was a need for political direction.
- Sir P. Mayhew: Agree with that.
- Prime Minister: Why not meet in early November?
- Sir P. Mayhew: Let officials prepare the way further before we meet.
- J. Chilcot: We have to find appropriate language for the Joint Framework Document without having precise wording for constitutional changes.
- Ambassador Blatherwick: Detailed information on constitutional change would have the undesirable effect of dominating the talks process from the outset.

Before adjourning for lunch there was a brief discussion on what the Prime Minister and Taoiseach would say to the press.

Joseph Small
28/10/1994

FAX

ANNEX 1

Ambassador
Mr Wrafter
Mr Murray
Mr Hayes
Mr Duignan

**Working Meeting at Chequers 24/10/94
Interviews with Taoiseach and Tanaiste**

For the record, the following interviews were carried out at the Embassy with the Taoiseach and the Tanaiste following the working meeting at Chequers on 24 October 1994;

Taoiseach & Tanaiste

- 16.30 Photograph on arrival at Embassy, Reuters
- 16.55 Press Conference for Irish media [incl Rodney Rice, RTE]
- 18.30 Photograph departing Embassy, "Irish Post"

Taoiseach

- 17.15 Recorded interview with Jim Dougal, BBC NI
- 17.25 Recorded interview with Ken Reid, UTV
- 17.35 Recorded interview with Jon Snow, C4 News
- 17.45 Live Interview with Sky
- 18.05 Live Interview with Donal Kelly, Six One News
- 18.15 Recorded interview with Donal Kelly, Nine O'Clock News

Tanaiste

- 17.10 Live interview with Sky
- 17.20 Recorded interview, National Public Radio, NPR
- 17.25 Live telephone interview with Myles Dungan, "Today at 5"
- 17.30 Live interview, Radio 4 "PM" programme
- 17.45 Recorded interview, IRN for Kerry North radio
- 17.50 Recorded interview, BBC World Service, "Europe Today"
- 18.10 Recorded interview, BBC Radio 4 "World Tonight"

[times are approximate]

Helena Nolan
25/10/94

Statement by the Taoiseach Mr Albert Reynolds, TD

The British Prime Minister, Mr John Major and I, accompanied by the Tanaiste, Mr Dick Spring and the Secretary of State Sir Patrick Mayhew had a very useful and productive meeting at Chequers today. We reviewed the development of the peace process, and the progress towards completion of the Joint Framework Document.

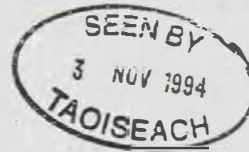
The two complete ceasefires, some months after the Downing Street Declaration, represent, a major achievement, on which we are both determined to build. We are both committed to the further consolidation of the peace process, which should be made visible in security dispositions on the ground. We agreed that there should be a discussion about the best means of putting the enormous paramilitary weapons arsenals out of action for good.

We made significant substantive progress and discussed outstanding issues in relation to the Joint Framework Document. We have asked our officials working under the Secretary of State and the Tanaiste to work intensively and to make the fastest possible progress on the completion of the Document.

Overall, we had a very good informal meeting, the latest in an unprecedented series over the past twelve months. We believe that by continuing to work closely together as two Governments, we can best advance the cause of peace in Northern Ireland and the early achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting political settlement.

24 October 1994

SECRET



H. G. ...

**Tête-à-tête between the Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister,
Chequers, 24 October 1994**

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The Taoiseach had a private meeting with the British Prime Minister at Chequers, lasting 45 minutes, prior to the plenary session. The Prime Minister was accompanied by his Diplomatic Secretary, Mr Rod Lyne, and the Taoiseach by the undersigned.

The Prime Minister made a brief reference to the debate in the Commons later this week, and indicated that he would probably not be intervening. Their problem was not the Opposition, but some of those in his own party. He indicated the possibility that there would be some unilateral surrender of Loyalist arms at an early date.

The Taoiseach referred to his contacts with Loyalist leaders, and the role of Bill Flynn in encouraging Gerry Adams and now the Loyalists.

The Prime Minister said it was unlikely that all weapons would be handed in, but the Governments had to be seen to be addressing the problem. He then referred to the proposed topics he would cover in plenary.

The Taoiseach said that the arms issue had been put up to Sinn Féin at their meeting last week, and they had readily agreed that arms was a subject that would have to be dealt with.

The Prime Minister said it was a question of mechanics. Many of the arms would be South of the border. He suggested that Sir John Chilcot and Tim Dalton might meet to make recommendations. The question of an amnesty for holding weapons would have to be considered.

● The Taoiseach referred to the requests to legally hold defensive weapons. He accepted that the peace process could not be settled without this whole area being dealt with.

The Prime Minister identified the problems in the Framework Document as relating to cross-border structures, Arts 2 & 3, and the default mechanism (he was reminded of the European issue as well). They also needed to consider the next steps. Progress had been astonishing, and the difference could be felt on the ground.

They had three difficult tightropes to tread

- keeping the momentum going;
- not pushing the market faster than it will bear;
- sticking together as Governments.

The next steps were agreeing the Framework Document, engaging in the talks about talks, visible changes on the ground (on security advice), and addressing social disadvantage of the least well off. It was important not to get out of step. Martin McGuinness had been making pure mischief. There were forces that would like to open up differences between the two Governments on cross-border structures, the RUC, Articles 2 and 3. Last Friday's initiative might not have worked, or get the right response from Unionists. He complained strongly about the Irish Times story (Geraldine Kennedy), which he believed emanated from Foreign Affairs, and which was anything but helpful. It had upset the 'horses' in the North, and also complicated his press conference. The Taoiseach confirmed that Geraldine Kennedy's report had not been inspired by him. On the RUC, the Prime Minister spoke of the aim being a return to civilian policing. He also said there was more movement on the ground than might be apparent, which was being concerted by the GOC and the Chief Constable. He said that the hyping of issues would make progress more difficult.

The Prime Minister said the real political difficulty was the criticism that they were not fighting to keep NI within the UK. They had emphasised there was no comparison with Scotland and Wales.

The Taoiseach said he had remarked that he did not expect to see unity in his lifetime, and he constantly stressed the principle of consent. The Prime Minister agreed that this was very helpful.

The Taoiseach said that it was the Prime Minister's mention of another document that had perhaps given rise to other briefings.

The Prime Minister said that the Joint Framework Document dealt primarily with Strands 2 & 3, but does not indicate what happens in Strand 1. It was a question of putting forward a complete package, not a suggestion that Strand 1 should go ahead unilaterally on its own.

The Taoiseach suggested that the Tánaiste and the Secretary of State might consult about what is in it.

The Prime Minister said they could not formally consult over what's in it. It concerned what came out of discussion with the SDLP and others in 1992. He was happy to agree the Framework Document as soon as possible, hopefully by Christmas.

He indicated the other document could be ready, when needed. They hoped they might start the talks about talks before Christmas, earlier if justified.

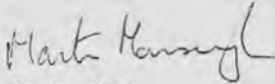
The Taoiseach asked if they would prefer to have the Framework document in advance of explanatory talks. The Prime Minister said that would be preferable, but was not absolutely vital.

The Prime Minister enquired about the Forum. The Taoiseach filled him in on immediate plans and on the Chairperson Catherine McGuinness. He mentioned it was proposed to give deprived community group access. He briefed the Prime Minister on the weekend searches. It was agreed there was no evidence for Paisley's claim of new arms shipments.

The Prime Minister pointed out that there were large areas of NI where there was no patrolling. Where there was patrolling, hours had been reduced. The RUC were now getting

more quickly to the scene of crime, and there could now be more policing. He felt attitudes to the policy in Nationalist areas were changing for the better. Trade was up by 6% in Belfast. They had lifted all controls on roads. It was unheard of for a Prime Minister to have dinner in a Belfast restaurant.

The Taoiseach referred to his meeting with Gusty Spence and David Ervine shortly after their announced ceasefire. They had a more open view. They helped to take the pressure off Molyneaux, and put the pressure on Paisley. They had identified that the territorial claim resided in Article 3, but noted there was no Irish army at the border. He had emphasised to them there were no proposals for Joint Authority.



25 October 1994.