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SECRET

Meeting between Taoiseach and British Prime Minister

London, 20 December, 1994.

Summary Report of Plenary Session

The plenary session was preceded by a tête-à-tête between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister which lasted for about an hour and a quarter.

While that meeting was in progress the Tanaiste had a separate meeting with the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Minister of State Ancram and Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd. During these series of meetings officials on both sides had another meeting in Number 10 which was presided over by Cabinet Secretary Sir Robin Butler. All three meetings, in effect, converged in the Cabinet Room for the plenary session.

After some preliminary courtesies Mr. Quentin Thomas, at the invitation of the Prime Minister, reported on the two meetings which he and other officials on the British side had had with Sinn Fein in December. A further meeting in mid-January was envisaged. He also reported on one meeting which officials on the British side had with representatives of the Loyalists. Mr. Thomas' report was broadly along the lines of the reports of these meetings already received from the Embassy in London or the

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(returned to me to day
by his teacher
who received this
note from the Taoiseach)

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Anglo-Irish Secretariat in Maryfield. The Prime Minister, in summarising, described these meetings as "preliminary skirmishing", where defences had been sounded out. He acknowledged that they were coming up to a difficult period in January/February.

The Taoiseach enquired as to what Sinn Fein expectations were. Mr. Thomas said that, in his view, they could not have expected much from these meetings. The Prime Minister said that he had not been surprised at the outcome to date.

The Taoiseach asked how much room was available in terms of time before discussions reached a crunch. Mr. Quentin Thomas in response said that movement would be needed on the two sides. If both Governments were seen to be standing together progress could be possible: if this was not the case then the position would be very different.

The Prime Minister mentioned that in the tête-à-tête two things had been agreed. Firstly, discussions on the Framework Document should be concluded by end January and meetings in this regard should resume in early January. Secondly, they had agreed to look separately to see if it would be possible to put together a package of confidence building type measures i.e. things that could be delivered on both sides that would give a signal that the two Governments are back in business. They had also

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discussed the arms question, constitutional developments, all-party talks, the need to avoid boxing people into corners, north-south bodies, the Republic of Ireland Act and the development of the Irish language in Northern Ireland.

The Taoiseach spoke of the need to search for words on the arms issue that would not leave too much fresh air between the two Governments. The Prime Minister indicated that no date for the Summit meeting had been settled: for the future the focus would be on the conclusion of the Framework Document. He added that he had also discussed with the Taoiseach the development of east-west co-operation as well as north south co-operation (as a type of balancing measure).

The Taoiseach expressed the view that the arms issue was the most dangerous. While substantive progress on this issue was important it was not an obstacle at this stage of preliminary discussions. He conveyed his thanks to the Prime Minister for taking the initiative in arranging the meeting so soon after his appointment, adding that he was happy with the outcome.

The Prime Minister stated that he too was happy with the meeting. The line to be taken at the subsequent press briefing was agreed [there should be no reference to any confidence building measures at this stage]. As

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regards communications between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister the same close liaison would continue as before. On decommissioning of arms that question would have to be addressed in the preliminary talks but was not an obstacle to progress at this stage. The same position applied in relation to discussions with Loyalists representatives.

A copy of the editing transcript of the doorstep interview given by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach outside Number 10 Downing Street following the meeting (which concluded at about 6.45 p.m.) is attached to this note.



Frank Murray,
4 January. 1995.

- c.c. ✓ Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs.
✓ Secretary, Department of Justice.
✓ Mr. Sean O hUiginn, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs - please copy to Ambassador Small.
✓ Mr. Brian McCarthy, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach.



5 January, 1995.

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Mr. Major
Mr. Bruton
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Information Section
British Embassy
33 Merrion Road
Dublin 4

Tele: 2695211
Fax: 2600620

Date: 21 December 1994

Our Ref: 12/105

EDITED TRANSCRIPT OF A DOORSTEP INTERVIEW BY THE
PRIME MINISTER, JOHN MAJOR, AND IRISH PRIME MINISTER, JOHN BRUTON,
DOWNING STREET, LONDON, TUESDAY, 20 DECEMBER 1994

PRIME MINISTER MAJOR:

We will endeavour to complete the framework document as speedily as we can. We have agreed that our officials will meet in early January to take matters further. A few days after the officials meeting there will be a meeting at Foreign Minister level to see what further progress can be made.

There are important issues to be determined in those talks, many in relationship to Sinn Fein, many in relationship to the Loyalist paramilitaries as well. We share the view that substantial progress needs to be made on the decommissioning of arms not just with Sinn Fein but also of course with the Loyalist paramilitaries

PRIME MINISTER BRUTON:

Both governments have shown by the prompt arrangements of this meeting how determined they both are to move forward on the peace process and also towards bringing the communities closer together on the island of Ireland.

QUESTION (BELFAST TELEGRAPH):

Has the Taoiseach confirmed or denied to you the assessment made by Albert Reynolds about the state of negotiations over the joint framework document that already agreement has been reached on the issues that he claimed were reached to that stage?

PRIME MINISTER MAJOR:

I am not going to comment on what Albert had to say last week. The Taoiseach and I certainly looked at the extent of agreement that exists in the joint framework document. But rather more importantly, we were looking at the areas that remain to be agreed in the framework document. We also looked at how we might seek a way through those areas to find a final agreement. That is why we have agreed that we will have officials meet to carry on our discussion in early January.

QUESTION:

Are you in trouble?

PRIME MINISTER MAJOR:

No. Our negotiations on the framework document are not in trouble. I think both the Taoiseach and I are optimistic about the prospects of reaching agreement on these other matters but they do have to be discussed.

PRIME MINISTER BRUTON:

A great deal of progress has been made by the outgoing government and the British Government on that matter. There are a number of issues remaining to be resolved but this meeting shows the

determination on both our parts to resolve those issues quickly.

QUESTION:

Are you any clearer now on the way in which decommissioning of arms and explosives is going to take place and what are both your assessments of yesterday's bomb in Enniskillen? We have no confirmation yet of who was finally responsible for the Enniskillen incident.

PRIME MINISTER BRUTON:

The decommissioning of arms is a very important issue, it is important to build confidence in the peace process as well Enniskillen?

QUESTION:

Taoiseach, what are the outstanding disagreements with Mr Major on the question of the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons?

PRIME MINISTER BRUTON:

There isn't an area of disagreement here.

QUESTION:

How soon do you think there might be all-inclusive talks?

PRIME MINISTER MAJOR:

We cannot get all-inclusive talks unless we clear some of the difficulties that stand in the way of them in the preliminary talks. The speedier we can do that, the speedier we can have inclusive talks.

QUESTION:

Prime Minister, do you both agree on the point that Sinn Fein cannot be involved in those all-inclusive talks until the issue of the arms has been from your point of view satisfactorily resolved and the weapons are destroyed?

PRIME MINISTER MAJOR:

We do need to see some substantial progress made on this issue and I very much hope that we will get it.

PRIME MINISTER BRUTON:

It is important to point out that the preliminary discussions with Sinn Fein are at a comparatively early point at this stage.

ENDS