

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

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To: As revised by Taoiseach  
From: CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting between the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald and British Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, Sunday, 19th June, 1983 at Stuttgart European Council.

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The meeting began at 8.30 a.m. and concluded at 9.00 a.m. Apart from the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, it was attended by Sir Robert Armstrong, Cabinet Secretary, Mr. John Coles, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister and the undersigned.

The Prime Minister, after the usual courtesies, agreed with the Taoiseach as to the high quality of the handling of the Council by Chancellor Kohl. She said that she doubted whether, if the same sort of tensions had built up under Mr. Papandreou, (who will be the next President of the Council in Office), he would have been able to handle them. Mr. Kohl had the political clout. Germany was really important in the Community. She said that after the difficulties on the present occasion, which were even worse than in Dublin and Luxembourg, she hoped that what happened this year would be a sort of precedent for any settlement next year.

She then invited the Taoiseach to open on his concerns.

The Taoiseach spent some time in explaining the background to the Dowra case and made certain suggestions as to how it might be handled. The Prime Minister asked that a careful note be taken of what had been said so that the matter could be dealt with.\* Cooperation and security between the two countries was of the utmost importance.

The Taoiseach then went on to explain the background to the McGovern (Stronge) case where we were awaiting the return of the faulty warrant sent back on 8th June and mentioned the Attorney General's belief that Court action would remove many of the perceived difficulties. He asked the British to bear this in mind. The Prime Minister, again, took careful note of what was being said and asked that the matter be pursued carefully on their side.

The Taoiseach then went on to describe the extent to which intimidation had taken place at the last election in Northern Ireland. In resisting this the SDLP had put women in as personation agents because of their greater courage in face of IRA intimidation. In fact, in one particular polling

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\* A separate note on this is available.

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booth, a woman had turned away 240 people who were attempting personation - out of a total of about 900 who were supposed to vote at the booth. She had been threatened by Sinn Fein and, finally, had been driven away from the booth in a Saracen armoured car. The Prime Minister expressed horror at what had been going on and asked if there was any way in which the whole matter could be raised - for example, by way of PQ in the House - and given far wider publicity.

The Taoiseach then went on to say that, with the possible exception of Armagh, personation, although on a very wide scale, probably did not make any difference to the final result in terms of seats. On this, he wanted to emphasise that 93% of the increase in the Sinn Fein vote had been attributed to their standing in extra Constituencies or to an increase in the total nationalist vote as distinct from a swing to Sinn Fein. The real increase in their vote was very much less than they had been making out and the ostensible "increase" was a notable propaganda point for them. The facts should be made clear, in all possible ways.

The Prime Minister pursued again the question of how the extent of intimidation and personation could be made known. She then enquired as to whether there was any possibility that the SDLP would go into the Assembly. The Taoiseach said that this was politically impracticable at the present stage. In fact he believed that if they had gone into the Assembly the result for them at the last election would have been worse. It was possible that with other developments, the time could come when they might be able to go in. But that was not yet.

Returning to the problem of intimidation and harassment, the Taoiseach said it was important people should be aware of the scale of the problem. It just was not being reported, possibly because journalists also suffered intimidation. He said that in our legislation, we had made it an offence to "attempt" personation - whereas, in British law, as he understood it, a person had actually to vote in another's name in order to be charged. There was a fair possibility that Sinn Fein might adopt similar tactics at our Local Elections which could be held next June.

The Prime Minister then enquired as to the possibility that John Hume, whom the Taoiseach had mentioned earlier might raise the issue by way of PQ. The Taoiseach asked the Prime Minister if there was any possibility that she would see him, and learn directly from him about the scale of personation, and other problems, of which he could speak with authority. The Prime Minister heard the request, with reasonable sympathy, and asked if Mr. Hume could first write her a letter on the subject. The Taoiseach said that perhaps she could see him as the Leader of a political party in the

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House rather than in response to such a letter. The Prime Minister said that she had seen Gerry Fitt who was a very "brave man." The trouble was that if she saw John Hume as a Leader of a political party she would be faced immediately for a request for a further meeting with Paisley. The trouble with dealing with Irish parties like this was that if once you saw one Leader, you were asked immediately to make time to see them all. At the same time she was desperately anxious to stop the Provos and the sort of actions for which Sinn Fein were responsible and would therefore respond positively to this suggestion. She mentioned again the question of the Assembly. The Taoiseach said that he was convinced that if the SDLP had gone into the Assembly, Sinn Fein would have gained even more ground.

The Taoiseach then went on to describe the work of the Forum. He said that he was particularly concerned that sensitivity should be shown to the position of the Unionists and that the Forum might help in developing among our people a better idea of Unionist beliefs and susceptibilities. He believed that there was now a good prospect that it might work in this way, as had been his intention in establishing the Forum. He was anxious to develop a nationalist concept which was much more open. He was not convinced that his opposite number took the same view and it might be difficult to bring him along but he did not exclude the possibility. John Hume was very important in this respect. He was determined that the work of the Forum would be completed, and the organisation out of the way, by the end of the year.

The Taoiseach then went on to talk about Anglo-Irish cooperation generally and mentioned the proposed Encounter organisation, about which a meeting was to be held shortly at official level. Mrs. Thatcher said that Sir David Orr would head the organisation on their side.

The Taoiseach then went on to raise the question of the next substantive meeting. The Prime Minister was immediately receptive to the idea and said that - "we should meet more often". The rest of the year was, however, looking difficult. There would be a Party Conference in October and 10 days in November would be taken up with the Commonwealth Conference. Would it be possible to leave the proposed meeting until after then? The Taoiseach said that he was anxious not to have the meeting too near to the time when the Forum would be reporting - which he expected would happen in or about the middle of December. The Prime Minister indicated appreciation of the position and said that when her people had a chance to

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consider her diary perhaps a date might be found before the Commonwealth Conference. It was accepted later that it could be indicated that a meeting had been agreed and that it would probably be held before the end of the year.

The attached press statement was agreed following the meeting.

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19th June, 1983.

cc. Mr. S. Donlon, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs.