

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

SECRET & PERSONAL

## Northern Ireland

The Taoiseach and Prime Minister met in Hillsborough Castle from 11.30 a.m. to approximately 12.30 p.m. for discussions prior to their joint press conference. The meeting was attended also by Sir Robert Armstrong, Cabinet Secretary, Charles Powell, Private Secretary and the undersigned. Though this note is in the form of direct speech, it does not purport to reproduce exactly what the participants said.

Prime Minister: In presenting this Agreement I am going to talk of four major objectives: first, that the Agreement aims to achieve peace and stability and to improve our efforts against the men of violence.

Next, I am entering into the Agreement in total good faith. I mean what I say in it. There are no other understandings or secret agreements.

Thirdly, I am absolutely determined to make it succeed. And fourthly, its success will, in the end, depend on the will of the people themselves. It is they who will really make it work.

Taoiseach: I am totally with you in this approach. People must take the Agreement for what it is. There is balance in it and its objectives must be acceptable to all.

Incidentally, in my opening remarks I will be using a paragraph in Irish, which I will translate immediately afterwards.

Armstrong: A key-note is that the people can seize the opportunity the Agreement gives them.

Taoiseach: We all know the questions and answers on which so much work has been done. It is important that we answer questions more or less in the same way and do not let serious differences emerge in our replies.

Prime Minister: I agree with you - though we should not be too meticulously together. Our objectives are the same. Our good faith is the same. The only way forward - to construct a democracy - is through constitutional politics.

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Taoiseach: There is a distinction between democratic politics - which is what Sinn Fein profess - and constitutional politics which Sinn Fein do not accept. They do not accept our constitutional position. It is important in any descriptions of the Agreement that we do not describe it as part of a process or frighten people by emphasising too much certain aspects of it. We must play it straight down the middle, emphasising its balance.

Prime Minister: It is better to describe it as a way forward rather than a step forward because a step always implies that another step will follow. So far as I am concerned I must emphasise that it does not endanger the rights of the unionists.

Taoiseach: We will be designating Peter Barry as the Permanent Irish Ministerial Representative. He will have a heavy workload .....

Prime Minister: Foreign Secretaries are not overworked. They spend half their time travelling to meetings. They could halve the number of meetings and do twice the work at each of them - and attain the same results as now.

Taoiseach: As a former Minister for Foreign Affairs, I am not convinced of what you say. I agree with you, however, that we could do with half the number of European Councils.

Prime Minister: This Conference will give the Foreign Ministers something constructive to do. Now, Mr Nally, will you think of the most difficult questions that I might be asked at the press conference and you, Robert, do the same for the Taoiseach.

There then followed a series of questions which the Taoiseach and Prime Minister discussed together, on status, courts, what was in the Agreement for unionists and nationalists, responsibility without power, security co-operation, the question of whether the armies would meet or make contact, secret agreements, UDR, judiciary (in particular the feelings of the Northern judiciary about the Agreement), the RUC, what was meant by the reference in the Agreement to electoral arrangements, the terms of the Dail motion, devolution (and the sort of inducements the Agreement offered to the unionists to accept power-sharing devolution), whether the Agreement was a "internal" solution, the description "consultative", a Bill of Rights etc.

On the conclusion of this session, the Taoiseach and Prime Minister went to the room where the press conference was to be held and considered the detailed arrangements for the conference.

*A*

c.c. Taniste, Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Justice, Attorney General, Ambassador Dorr, Messrs Donlon, Ward, Lillis and Quigley.

18 November 1985