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Meeting between the Taoiseach and the
British Prime Minister, London, 5th September, 1979

Private Meeting

1. The meeting, which began at 2.40 p.m. was preceded by a working lunch and followed by a plenary session. Separate notes are available on the discussions at the lunch and at the plenary session. The private meeting was attended by the Taoiseach, the Prime Minister, Mr. Cliff Whitmore, Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, and Mr. Nally. It concluded at 3.45 p.m.
2. The Prime Minister, after the usual formalities, emphasised her understanding that both the Taoiseach and herself were equally anxious to stamp out terrorism, which was a threat not only in Ulster but to democracy everywhere. She said that the events of Monday, 27th August, had been so terrible that the public would require that something more should be done to eliminate this threat. She appreciated that the Irish public were just as concerned and just as grief stricken as were the British public at what had happened. She thought that the present time afforded both an opportunity and a mandate from the people the present meeting was so that the Taoiseach and herself could discuss what the two countries could do together to improve security.
3. The Taoiseach said that the horror and revulsion in the United Kingdom were matched by feelings in Ireland. Irish people had a deep sense of shame for what had happened to Lord Mountbatten on their territory. This applied not only to the people living in Ireland but to the Irish people in Britain. However, this attitude had not been reflected in the British popular Press. We fully shared the desire to stamp out terrorism. This was the case not only for very obvious reasons but also because it posed a threat to the country's economic progress which, again, in turn could in itself pose a serious problem for existing institutions. The feelings reflected in the British Press on the occasion were both tragic and untrue. The Taoiseach said that Mrs. Thatcher had calmed things down but he would have greatly appreciated some public indication of appreciation of the fact that the Irish Government were doing everything possible to eliminate terrorism. The Secretary of State had referred recently to the necessity for observing the rule of law. This applied equally in Ireland where the position was made even more inflexible by the existence of a written constitution and a Supreme Court

which guarded its provisions jealously. Notwithstanding these limitations we had enacted a code of legislation in Ireland against terrorism which was stronger, so far as he was aware, than that of any other European Country. We had increased the size and improved the equipment of the Police and the Army. So far as he knew co-operation with the R.U.C. was excellent and he was unaware of any complaints from that source on this co-operation. At the same time certain proposals, purporting to emanate from the British Government, had been given a great deal of publicity in the British Press. These included hot pursuit, army to army contact, the presence of R.U.C. at interrogations and joint patrols. He did not know what credence to give these suggestions but there were serious objections to many of them. Before he went on he would like the Prime Minister to say which if any of these suggestions she would like to discuss.

4. Mrs. Thatcher said that extensive as was the co-operation between the security forces in the two countries, it must now be obvious to everybody that what was being done just was not working. She mentioned the murders of Aleroy Neave, Ewart-Biggs and now Mountbatten. Further, in the North, certain terrible things were still being done. Within the last few days a young housewife had been shot in the arms and knees. There was a strong feeling in the United Kingdom that terrorists could just come there and bomb and then get back across the borders. She knew that the Taoiseach appreciated well that the I.R.A. were out to attack both North and South in Ireland. However, once they got to the South it was very difficult to get evidence. In the North, they had 12,000 troops, and 7,000 in the R.U.C. A further increase of 1,000 in the numbers in the R.U.C. would be taking place within the next two years. This time would have to elapse because of the difficulty of getting sufficient candidates of adequate caliber in the North. In whatever they were to decide they should be to say nothing in public. Security specifics should not be discussed. The prime aim was to stamp out terrorism.

5. The Prime Minister said that she appreciated that the Garda/R.U.C. co-operation had been substantially increased and improved. However, recently a special crime squad which had operated at the border had been disbanded. Her information was that the squad had been effective and during the time it had been there there had been no terrorist crime at that point. She would propose that the two "Intelligence Chiefs" should get together and discuss a proposal to re-institute this squad. She wanted to make it clear that in whatever she was suggesting, she would not be asking anything which she was not prepared to give herself. Co-operation must be on

the basis of total reciprocation.

6. The next request was that a member of the R.U.C. should be able to sit in on interrogations. If that was denied it seemed likely that the possibility of getting evidence was also being denied. Whatever the legal position, the practical facts were that once a person having committed a crime left the jurisdiction there was just very little possibility of collecting the evidence necessary to prosecute. This made extradition proceedings futile - whatever about "political" implications. She emphasised that in everything she was saying she was offering equal facilities on the British side. Garda Officers could attend at R.U.C. interrogations - if they desired.

7. Her third request was that there should be a Garda Officer attached to the R.U.C. to ensure closer liaison. Similarly, an R.U.C. Officer should operate with the Gardaí with this specific purpose in mind.

8. Her fourth suggestion concerned the use of helicopters. The words "hot pursuit" had been used but this was a wrong phrase. What she wanted was that helicopters should be able to fly from 10/15 kilometers across the border, without having to obtain specific permission. This sort of facility would enable anybody fleeing across the border to be kept in view, and their position notified to the Irish Security Forces through the ordinary channels, if necessary. There were other additional purposes which could be served by this permission, relating to the laying of explosives.

9. She was proposing that the Minister for Justice and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with their Chief Constables should meet to discuss these proposals with a view to firm decisions.

10. On extradition, she said the the U.K. extradite 20/25 of their own nationals every year. They acted under the 1965 Extradition Act, in so far as Ireland was concerned, a 1977 Fugitive Offenders Act, and an old 1870 Act.

11. Mrs. Thatcher referred to an interview in the Daily Mail of that day in which a person called Mullen had given an interview in the United States referring to the smuggling of arms into Dublin, allegedly, with the connivance of Irish Customs Officers. She said that these arms were then transferred across the border into Ulster. Admittedly the Ulster border was a British

problem. However, the Irish Border and Ports were an Irish problem.

12. On the suggestion for a political solution, she said "of course we are straining for it" but recent events had put off its possibility. She asked that the Taoiseach and Irish Government use their influence with the political parties in Ulster to ensure acceptability of whatever might be agreed upon. The British Government were dealing with the problem and would come up with proposals as soon as possible.

13. The Taoiseach said that the border squad, to which Mrs. Thatcher had referred had been withdrawn partly because of the incidents of crime in other parts of the Republic. Because of the success of Irish Government and Irish/American influences the flow of cash from the United States to the I.R.A. had diminished - with a temporary upsurge as a result of provisional propaganda on Long Kesh. The I.R.A. were trying to make up this deficiency through raids on banks in the South. The withdrawal of the special squad as part of an effort to conquer this activity was, in the judgement of the Garda Authorities, more effective in counteracting the I.R.A. than their presence on the border. However, he would certainly have the question of their withdrawal looked into. The two top men i.e. Mr. Atkins and the Chief Constable, or whoever the British wish to nominate, could meet in a fortnight or so. The Irish Foreign Minister was Mr. Atkins's counterpart and because of the considerable political implications of anything to do with Northern Ireland he would be leading the Irish Delegation on this point. It was imperative, in anything that was done to avoid public suggestions that we were deficient in security. The sort of criticisms which had been made recently were totally counterproductive. They affected the willingness of Garda and Army Personnel, on the ground, to go ahead with their very difficult tasks.

14. The Taoiseach said that under old arrangements, four committees existed for liaison between the Garda and the RUC. Was there a necessity to intensify this form of co-operation? Was it not working in any way? Why could security problems not be directed through these channels?

15. On the suggestion of an RUC presence at southern interrogations, the Taoiseach said that advice he was getting was to the effect that this could be counterproductive. The special atmosphere on both sides of the border must be taken into account. The Gardaí relied to a very great extent on local information which could dry up very quickly if wrong steps were taken. There was, in addition,

the considerable risk to the Gardai and RUC Personnel concerned. He was advised that it was more effective to get information from the RUC and, if necessary, to improve the feed of this information so that it could be used in the best way possible. The Prime Minister said that this may well be the case but the present systems just were not working. The Taoiseach said that he was not excluding the suggestion. What he was saying was that these difficulties must be borne in mind. The Irish Attorney General had advised that if the RUC were present at Southern Interrogations, there was a high degree of probability that the Courts here would exclude any evidence obtained at the interrogation. This was a very real problem. We had experience of legislation enacted in 1976 which provided for 7 day detention without charge. Experience with the working of that legislation was to the effect that the Courts refused to accept evidence obtained after the "normal" detention period of 48 hours. The net effect of enacting this type of legislation was, in practice, to make the law less effective. In saying all this he was not rejecting the Prime Minister's suggestion but simply putting down a marker on the very real difficulties which existed.

16. The Taoiseach then went on to say that there were well recognised procedures for helicopter over-flights which, on his information, were working well. He certainly had no objection to examining the Prime Minister's suggestion sympathically.

17. On the question of communications, he was informed that the RUC were sensitive as to how contacts between North and South operated. The Irish Army had not a similar role to the British Army. The Security Authority in the South was the Police Force and the army acted in support of it. In 1976 their powers had been extended by enabling them to arrest and detain a person for six hours, without a police presence. This was, however, a ~~very~~ exceptional measure and in no way equated the function of the army here with that of the British Army north of the border. The Prime Minister said that whatever about the legal position, the present method of communication from the British Army to the RUC to the Gardai was cumbersome. It just could not meet the sort of emergency situation which could easily arise. The Taoiseach said that there was no foundation whatsoever for the suggestion that chases occurred frequently which had to stop at the border. He had made specific enquiries on this point and on what he was told this sort of thing hardly ever occurred, if at all. The Prime Minister said that too much of recent violence was happening on or near the border. The RUC were too effective in other parts of Northern Ireland and for this reason the violence was moving towards the border. The Taoiseach said that the vast majority of Northern violence was happening deep in Northern

Ireland. We would be more specific than he had been. There was no record of people being pursued across the border with the British Army or the RUC being stopped by its existence. Mrs. Thatcher said "some of our chaps feel very strongly on this". What is needed is a massive effort.

18. The Taoiseach said that on the recent Panorama programme he had explained our position on extradition. Four European Countries do not extradite their own nationals in any circumstances. On this, Mrs. Thatcher said that they had completed an extradition treaty with Germany which enabled British or German nationals to be extradited irrespective of the nature of the offence or of their citizenship. The Taoiseach said he accepted this but the position was still as he had outlined it in the television programme, insofar as the signatories to the Council of Europe Convention on extradition were concerned.

19. Extradition was part of the judicial process. It was not to enable suspects to be transferred across borders for interrogation. The evidence must first exist for the judicial process to be perfected. The Prime Minister said that the 1976 legislation just could not work unless evidence could be accumulated. Since about 80% of all successful prosecutions in most countries, including Northern Ireland, were based on the outcome of interrogations the legislation could, in fact, be completely ineffective unless interrogations were effective.

20. The Taoiseach said that we were looking at the whole spectrum of criminal laws and procedures. These had come from a time when circumstances were completely different from those which existed today. They were designed to put the law in favour of the accused person who was, more often than not, a poor and unlettered. Sentences could well be savage. Now the criminal was sophisticated and often had access to money and the best legal brains available. The time had come to shift the balance in the law so as to protect the public and not the criminals.

21. On the question of arms imports. This obviously affected both countries. He had made enquiries before the meeting as to this very problem. He instanced the recent drugs finds in a container full of bananas. He said that, in fact, present container traffic makes one hundred percent surveillance of drugs or arms traffic across borders impossible. The Prime Minister said that this was obviously an intelligence question. The effectiveness of action hinged on the quality of the intelligence.

22. The Taoiseach said that he was not seeking to put anyone in the dock. References had often been made to the I.R.A. arms caches but only within the last week or so members of the so called Ulster Freedom Fighters had given a press conference at which, according to his information, there had been a display of the most sophisticated weaponry. There were arms caches in the North which would be sufficient to enable the present campaign to go on for ten or fifteen years. What was being done about this. He himself could be described as an 'anti-terrorist' and was keen on effective action but he knew that at the root of all the problems was the political question. In dealing with the present campaign it was essential that this should not be overlooked. He appreciated the difficulties. The earlier Sunningdale effort had collapsed in 1974. This had been followed by the Convention, which had, in turn, been unproductive. Despite these attempts it was essential to get at the cause as well as trying to deal with the effects. The Prime Minister said that no political solution would stop the Provisional I.R.A. or the Irish National Liberation Army. She said she had read some of the speeches of Gerry Adams and these fully bore out her view. It was essential to go for the men of violence. It would help enormously if we stopped talking of ultimate unity. What we must deal with now are the practical steps for tomorrow.

23. The Taoiseach said that on this point, it was essential that the British Army or other official spokesmen should stop talking about the I.R.A. as being "sophisticated" or using any other similar type of adjective. What was being done in this respect only helped the I.R.A. recruitment. It was essential that it should be stopped. The Prime Minister took careful note of this.

24. The Taoiseach said also that persistent ^{public} complaints about security were ~~totally~~ counter-productive. In the South both the Gardaí and the Army were totally committed in the fight against terrorism. It did that cause no good to be continually snipping at their efforts - especially when so much of the crime was occurring in the North. They did not patrol or operate there. The Prime Minister said she did not control the media and was particularly sensitive to the fact that certain people could, apparently, appear there, as spokesmen for terrorist organisations. This was something she was following up. The Taoiseach said if we can take effective and efficient steps, we will do so but we should not talk about them too much. Whatever was to be done should be done quietly, and by agreement. The Prime Minister said that she agreed. In whatever emerged from the meeting it could

be said that the Taoiseach and Prime Minister had discussed many things but were not going to reveal anything more than that. The Taoiseach said that arrangements could go ahead for the meeting between the Secretary of State, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs with the Minister for Justice also present.

25. The Prime Minister said that when they had their proposals for an initiative ready they would tell the Taoiseach about them. The Taoiseach said that whatever happened, it was important to remember that whatever initiative was taken must be taken together or it would fail.

26. The meeting, which had over-run its time, then concluded. The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister departed to take part in the plenary session.

6th September, 1979