



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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SECRET AND PERSONAL

Meeting between the Taoiseach and President Reagan

White House 17 March 1986

Those in attendance on the American side were: The President, Vice-President Bush, Secretary of State Shultz, Chief of Staff Regan, Admiral Poindexter, Peter Somer of the National Security Council, Ambassador Heckler, and Mrs. Ridgeway of the State Department. In attendance with the Taoiseach on the Irish side were: Ambassador MacKernan, Secretary Donlon, and the undersigned. The meeting began at approximately 10:10 AM and concluded at 10:25 AM. It was followed immediately by a presentation, in the Rose Garden, of gifts from the Government and people of Ireland (of a Waterford Glass reproduction of the Statue of Liberty, and the usual bowl of shamrock). This note is in the form of direct speech. It does not, however, purport to be an exact reproduction of what was said.

PRESIDENT: We are greatly in support of what you have done in the recent accord. We hope and pray that the enterprise will be successful. There are some gentlemen who would not be too pleased to see the work succeeding. They are resisting what is happening. That is not a good thing.

TAOISEACH: I am very happy to be here. The Agreement is the result of a common intent of the two countries. It is very unusual in character. It was passed by an overwhelming majority in the British Parliament. In our Parliament the main opposition party opposed it. But among our people there is support now for the Agreement of approximately four-fifths of the population. In the North, three-fourths of the Nationalist population support it.

The problem has been there for a long time - over 100 years. It springs from the fact that the Unionist people felt that they had a right to determine not merely their membership of the U.K., but the way in which they should be allowed to govern or be governed within that country. For this reason the Agreement has come as a great shock for them. It has changed their whole perception of things. For this reason they are resisting what is happening and there are problems. I am hopeful, however, that these can be overcome with the firmness and determination of Mrs. Thatcher and of my own Government.

There are signs among the ordinary people in the North that they are not happy with the way things were developing up to the time of the strike in February. There are indications that they would hope to get back to talks on the future. Their politicians, however, got themselves onto hooks - which politicians generally should avoid doing. Even among them, however, there are signs of improvement. Nobody can be sure of how things will work out. The great majority of people are convinced that the Agreement is right and the framework for progress which it provides is right. Firmness in implementing it is most important. The change it brings about is truly historic. I want to thank you for your support during the long negotiations and on the day when it was signed. Your encouragement - and that of Speaker O'Neill - had the most profound effect. You have followed up this support with a proposal for aid -

PRESIDENT

We worked very hard to bring that about and are going to continue to work hard. What are other countries contributing?

