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RECORD OF PLENARY DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE IRISH PRIME MINISTER, AN TAOISEACH, HELD AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON FRIDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 1981

Present:

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| The Prime Minister | Dr Garret FitzGerald TD |
| The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary | Mr M O'Leary TD |
| The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland | Senator J Dooge |
| The Secretary of State for Energy | Dr E Kennedy |
| Mr Ian Gow MP | Mr D Nally |
| Sir Leonard Figg | Mr S Donlon |
| Sir Robert Armstrong | Mr D Neligan |
| Mr P Woodfield | Mr M Lillis |
| Mr W E Bell | Mr L Hourican |
| Mr R L Wade-Gery | Mr W Kirwan |
| Mr J A Marshall | Mr F Murray |
| Mr C A Whitmore | Mr D Grafton |
| Mr C C Wilcock | Mr F O'Muircheartaigh |
| Mr M O'D B Alexander | |
| Mr B Ingham | |
| Mr P H C Eyers | |

1. After arrangements had been agreed for the Prime Minister to give a press conference at 5.00 pm and the Taoiseach a press conference at 6.00 pm, the Prime Minister welcomed the Irish side to the Plenary. She said that her talk with the Taoiseach that morning had centred on the communiqué. It was proposed that the communiqué to be issued that afternoon should have attached to it a summary reflecting the Joint Studies and that the Joint Studies themselves should be published next Wednesday. She would herself almost certainly make a statement in the House of Commons on Tuesday and understood that the Taoiseach was to make a statement in the Dáil at the same time.

2. There followed a discussion of the advisability of not publishing in the summary to be attached to the Communiqué any passage reflecting the Joint Study on Security. After consideration it was agreed to delete those paragraphs in the Joint Report which referred to security matters and to make consequential amendments to the Communiqué.
3. Attention then turned to the text of the Communiqué to be issued. This was agreed after discussion, devoted especially to the language to be used to describe HMG's attitude to any decision of a majority in Northern Ireland in favour of constitutional change.
4. The Prime Minister then invited Lord Carrington to say what he and his colleagues had discussed that morning.
5. Lord Carrington said that the discussion had been divided between Community questions, Energy questions and Northern Ireland questions. As far as Community questions were concerned, they had discussed the Mandate. They had noted that there was not much time to do more than seek to get hard and fast guidelines agreed. It was to be hoped that flesh could be put on these without reopening the questions of principle. This process should be pursued by bilateral discussions. He had himself also raised Insurance and the question of liberalisation of Air Fares. He had asked Senator Dooge that the Irish should not stand in the way of British proposals in the EC. Senator Dooge had undertaken to look at the questions. Professor Dooge said that he was content with this summary. In answer to the

Prime Minister's question, Lord Carrington said that the Middle East had only been discussed informally at lunch.

6. The Secretary of State for Energy said that the three Energy questions discussed were those mentioned in the communiqué: the supply of gas from Kinsale to Northern Ireland - there was agreement that this was an economic proposition, the question was whether terms could be agreed. The North/South Interconnector had been discussed and there was agreement that this was an economic proposition and desirable but that there was a problem over security. As for the East/West Interconnector there was no security problem but the economics were doubtful. There was agreement that the best way forward was to undertake further economic and technical studies. The Tánaiste agreed. He added that the interruption of the North/South Interconnector was a political victory for the IRA. There had been consideration of whether it would be possible to restore the interconnector so that it supplied a limited area in Armagh and interference with the interconnector would mean automatic discontinuation of supply. He confirmed that the Irish side were ready to discuss the supply of Kinsale gas and wished to see a feasibility study for the East/West connector. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said that he would ask Mr. Butler to take up the question of a supply of gas from Kinsale with his opposite number as soon as possible. Price was the key issue. He doubted whether it would be possible to introduce now an arrangement whereby destruction of the interconnector brought with it immediate local penalties. This would be too transparent.

7. The Prime Minister asked about other issues: about the papers on Economic Cooperation and Measures to Encourage Mutual Understanding. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland mentioned Cooperation North. The Taoiseach explained that this was a private organisation concerned to establish closer relations between the two parts of Ireland without strings. It had had considerable success. There had been no adverse feedback, even from extremists in the North. The question was whether it should be given assistance by Government. He felt some hesitation. Funding by Government might lead it to become suspect. Senator Dooge said that Cooperation North had received some support from the Community under funds reserved for the Republic of Ireland but had absorbed almost the totality of these funds and this was not desirable. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said that he would like to help. The Prime Minister noted that it would be a pity if Cooperation North broke down. The money might come from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Vote. She thought spontaneous efforts of this sort were the most valuable.

8. The Prime Minister said that she knew that the Irish Government, like the UK authorities, were concerned about terrorism. She asked about the political problems which terrorism created. The Taoiseach said that there had been significant successes lately against the IRA but little but the level of violence had risen. In the last year or two it had become the case that when intercepted, terrorists shot policemen. This was a worrying development, though it did increase public antipathy to the terrorists. There had been a significant riot in Dublin but, no doubt because of the sharp reaction to it, there had been no recurrence.

The police response to it had been a bit rugged. It was hard to judge the political support of the IRA. Surveys suggested that it was small. But there had been much more support for the H-Block candidates than had been expected. The issue had now diminished in importance. He was happy to say that co-operation between the police forces in North and South was very close. Exchange of intelligence and information was very effective but it would never be possible to eradicate terrorism without eradicating its causes.

9. The Prime Minister asked whether polarisation of the communities which had been observed was disappearing. The Taoiseach said that it was in the Republic but from such information as he had had at second hand he found it hard to assess the position in Northern Ireland. What he had said about the constitution had helped with middle-class unionists but he doubted whether this was the case among working-class unionists. He was concerned that the SDLP should retain the bulk of the support of the minority. If that did not happen the consequences of polarisation could show in 6 months' time or so.
10. The Prime Minister asked how he thought that the Joint Studies would be received in the Republic. The Taoiseach said that expectations had been raised in November that had since been somewhat reduced. It was hard to say what the expectation was now. He hoped that there would be a positive reaction. He would of course present the communiqué positively. But the Opposition would wish to get the credit for what had been done. The Prime Minister noted that this was why the decision had been taken to publish. Accusations could then

be avoided. The Prime Minister noted that the Opposition in the United Kingdom was no longer pursuing a bipartisan policy on Northern Ireland. The Tánaiste interjected that he doubted however if they would see anything in the Joint Studies to attack. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said the problem was rather that Dr Paisley would attack the Joint Studies.

11. The Taoiseach said that he was concerned at the suggestion that there might be an increase in powers of local government. Several Councils had recently been found guilty of discrimination of one sort or another and he handed over a paper recording instances. His Government had doubts about any proposal to devolve further powers. That being said, he would be very happy to see progress towards devolved government though it was a very difficult field. He would be happy to talk about this question with the British Government. The Irish Government had good contacts with everyone in the North except paramilitaries. There had been times when it was difficult for the British to be informed. The Irish Government would be ready to help. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said in that connection that he would like to pay more visits to the South to discuss these matters.

12. In answer to a question from the Prime Minister, the Taoiseach said that the Irish authorities used every opportunity to influence the Americans. He hoped to invite the Friends of Ireland to come to Ireland soon and hoped they would visit also Northern Ireland. They had shown goodwill and were very courageous in their attacks on the terrorists. The Irish had done what they could to head-off Biaggi. Mr Prior interjected

that he had much admired Senator Dooge's speech at the United Nations.

13. The Prime Minister suggested that she and the Taoiseach should agree that they would both present their meeting positively. They would note that nothing had been said that would affect the neutrality of the Republic. They could describe the meeting as friendly, constructive and practical. The Taoiseach agreed with this but indicated that he would prefer to avoid any comparison with the last meeting.

14. The meeting ended at 4.20 pm.