



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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MEETING BETWEEN THE TAOISEACH
AND
PRIME MINISTER BLAIR
IN
STRASBOURG ON FRIDAY 10TH OCTOBER 1997,

The meeting lasted approximately 20 minutes. Those present were Taoiseach, Prime Minister Blair, John Holmes, Jonathan Powell, Alister Campbell, Joe Lennon and Paddy Teahon. Minister of State O'Donnell joined the meeting part of the way through.

1. The Prime Minister expressed regret about the departure of Ray Burke. He also said that he looked forward to meeting the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, David Andrews.
2. The Prime Minister then quickly got down to the subject of Strands 1, 2 and 3. He said that, in his judgement, some changes from the (internal) Framework Document would be likely to be put forward in Strand 1 but, overall, he felt there would not be significant problems between the parties in this area. In Strand 2, he believed that there would have to be "some form" of North/South structure to enable the two areas to work together.
3. The Taoiseach intervened at this point to say that the Strand 2 outcome would have to involve North/South institutions with executive powers in

particular areas. If this was not the case, there would be no point in calling a Referendum as he would know the outcome in advance.

4. The Prime Minister noted this point but said that the Unionist would have to obtain "cover" in Strand 3 if they were to go significantly in the North/South direction. He also raised the issue of broadening our discussion in the Anglo-Irish Conference to include non-Northern Ireland issues such as Europe.
5. Paddy Teahon observed, in response, that the Minister for Foreign Affairs had responsibility for Europe in the Irish case but that was not the position for the U.K where two Cabinet members were involved (Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland). He added, however, that there were areas such as social partnership, trade union recognition and minimum wage provision where there may well be benefit in having discussions between Ireland and the U.K.
6. The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach agreed that John Holmes and Paddy Teahon would discuss the matter further and see what practical arrangements could be considered for agreement.
7. The Taoiseach then raised the issue of prisoners, both Nationalists and Loyalists, in a confidence-building context. He reassured the Prime Minister on the status of prisoners transferred to our jurisdiction (in the terms of the attached note from Tim Dalton, Secretary-General, Department of Justice). The Prime Minister asked John Holmes to come back to Paddy Teahon on the issue.
8. The Taoiseach went on to speak of the serious problem posed by the proposed extension of the remit of the Parades Commission to cover "cultural" events. The Prime Minister, while listening very attentively

to the Taoiseach's presentation, appeared not to be fully aware of the issue and asked John Holmes to revert to Paddy Teahon on it.

9. The Taoiseach said that he understood the British position on the new "Bloody Sunday" material passed to them was that they had yet to make a decision, but would come back to us at some stage fairly soon. The Prime Minister agreed to do this.

Paddy Teahon.

CONFIDENTIAL**Transfer of Prisoners**

1. On the basis of the exchanges between Minister John O'Donoghue and the Home Secretary Jack Straw yesterday it seems that the British side are concerned that we might release transferees in the same way as other paramilitary prisoners and that they are uncertain about the nature of the guarantees we have given as regards "maintaining the integrity of sentence". (This is despite the fact that the same guarantees were given to the previous British Government). The Home Secretary seemed to be concerned also that the agreements now reached might simply be set aside at the whim of a succeeding Irish Government or Justice Minister.
2. I think we could confirm (if necessary in writing) to the Prime Minister that we take the understandings already reached in the matter to mean the following -
 - (1) there is no question of any transferees being considered for early release on the same basis as other paramilitary prisoners in this jurisdiction
 - (2) "maintaining integrity of sentence" means that the prospects of early release remains the same as they would have, had the transferees remained in the UK
 - (3) the reference to "exceptional circumstances" is intended to cover situations such as grave/permanent illness where, had the transferee remained in the UK, the question of early release would equally fall to be considered. It is also intended to cover the possibility that both Governments might deem it right in the context of reaching an eventual settlement of the Northern question to bring forward the release dates of paramilitary prisoners generally.
 - (4) Undertakings given to another Government by the Minister of the day will not be departed from unilaterally by a succeeding Minister of the same or another Government.

T.D.

10/10/97