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MEETING WITH MRS. THATCHER

NOTE:

Mr. Seán Ó hUiginn, Department of Foreign Affairs phoned me at home at about 4.45 p.m. on Saturday last, 1st September, 1979. He confirmed that the Embassy in London had transmitted the text of the Taoiseach's proposed statement (attached) to the British Authorities, indicating that we had a deadline of about 4 O'clock at which time we proposed to issue the statement. The definitive British response was now to hand. Mrs. Thatcher, who had been involved in the proceedings throughout had indicated that as the Press report giving rise to the Taoiseach's statement had appeared in an Irish newspaper she would write the Taoiseach a letter, rather than issue a statement. The text of her letter was now available and was as follows:-

"Thank you for your letter of 31st August. I am looking forward very much to seeing you.

Recent tragic events have delayed my reply to your kind invitation of 24th August to have talks with you in Dublin, in your capacity as President of the European Council as well as on Northern Ireland questions.

I suggested in my letter of 30th August that we should meet during your visit to London next week to discuss Lord Mountbatten's horrifying murder and its implications. I thought I might also take up your invitation to discuss E.E.C. topics.

I propose therefore that we discuss E.E.C. and other questions of this kind over lunch. After this, we should have a private talk before we are joined by our colleagues to discuss cross-border security matters.

I know that we are both equally anxious to stamp out terrorism. I hope that these arrangements are in line with what you had in mind."

There had been no discussion about whether the letter could be published. From the general tenor of the context with the British, Mr. O hUiginn felt that it might be best to see whether the statement being issued by the Taoiseach had satisfactorily cleared up the presentational aspects of the meeting. If it failed to do so, it seemed, on the basis of the context, that there would probably not be an objection from the British side

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indicating that he had

to the Taoiseach ~~having~~ received a letter from Mrs. Thatcher.

In conveying the text of Mrs. Thatcher's letter - arrangements were being made for its delivery - the British had indicated that they had had a full check made of all U.K. sources and they were able to say that no responsible British Official was responsible for the suggestions attributed to ~~that~~ in the press article by Dick Walsh. They had also indicated that if the Foreign and Commonwealth Office received enquiries, they would confirm that their position on the meeting was in line with the statement being made by the Taoiseach.

Mr. Ó hUiginn noted that the letter from Mrs. Thatcher had two elements of significance. On the one hand, the earlier section of it was helpful to the Taoiseach in relation to the presentation of the meeting. On the other hand, the reference to the plenary session discussing cross-border security matters indicated that, in the British view, the emphasis of the meeting would be heavily on these aspects. We agreed, however, that our position on the basis for the meeting was on record, that the Taoiseach could not be prevented from widening the discussion, whether in the private discussion or in the plenary session beyond cross-border security matters and that there was no need to carry our contacts with the British on this aspect any further.

I conveyed the text of Mrs. Thatcher's letter to the Taoiseach and to Mr. Frank Dunlop on the phone. *The latter had already commenced phoning the Taoiseach's statement to the news media*

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3rd September, 1979