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Scotland up to and during the general election, you need to retain the consent of people in Scotland for the union, so that is I think a similar position.

QUESTION:

Do you think your meeting today would raise hopes in Northern Ireland of an improvement in the security situation because surely that is uppermost in the minds of most people?

PRIME MINISTER:

The Taoiseach and I have known one another over many years, both as Ministers before he became Taoiseach and I became Prime Minister, we are used to doing business together, we have done business together in more than one capacity over a number of years. These meetings are regular meetings, they are not emergency meetings, they are not crisis meetings, it is one of a whole series of regular meetings that have gone on for a while, I instituted them a couple of years or so ago, they are going to go on continuing. I think the community of interest that exists both in the European Community, beyond the European Community and in terms of Irish matters make it absolutely right that we should have these twice yearly summits.

I do not want people under any of these summits to suddenly develop unrealistic expectations, if we have learned anything about the history of Ireland as a whole it is that patience is a virtue and patience is a necessity. So nobody should reach

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unrealistic expectations. Of course we will discuss security matters, we always discuss security matters and we rarely talk about security matters beyond our private discussions, I am sure that we will discuss them later tonight.

QUESTION:

Can I ask you both how you expect the European Community to respond to the renewed impatience from President Clinton and his avowed support for arming the ... and indeed air strikes?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think there is nothing fresh to say, you know the British government's position about that, it is as it was. I am sure the European Community summit will spend some time discussing Bosnia in all its aspects.

MR REYNOLDS:

I think we are all horrified by what we see on our screens every day of the week in relation to Bosnia and I think everybody knows that the view of the Irish government, the view of the British government, in relation to it and undoubtedly it will be discussed at the summit and hopefully we will be able to contribute to some way forward in the whole sad tragic situation of Bosnia.

QUESTION:

Was the question of a visit by The Queen raised or discussed?

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MR REYNOLDS:

No.

QUESTION:

Have you had a chance to read Sir Edward Heath's comments on the security situation where he said that you needed to lift the issue of terrorism higher on the political agenda, appoint a senior Cabinet Minister as a terrorism supremo and introduce a centralised counter-terrorist agency?

PRIME MINISTER:

I share with Ted Heath the importance of the issue, I do not share with him the way in which we should deal with the issue. It is very high on the agenda, it could scarcely be higher on the agenda and it will remain there.

QUESTION:

You talk about the need to get the parties around the table again, Sir Patrick Mayhew is talking to them to try and do that, how do you yourself think that they can be persuaded to get back into negotiations?

PRIME MINISTER:

You might have asked me that question before they began negotiations and you would be right to, you would say how are you ever going to get these people to sit round the table together, they never have done in the past? But we have crossed that

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Rubicon, they have sat round the table, they have made progress, they have made far more progress sitting around the table in discussion, parties that had never previously done that, than anybody realistically expected. The advent of the local elections in Northern Ireland and other matters have broken that continuous discussion for a while. I think it is a matter of persuasion and patience and I think we will get them back round the table. You ask me precisely how, if I knew precisely how, I would have done it last week, but that can be done I have no doubt.

QUESTION:

Is it conceivable that new devolutionary arrangements for Northern Ireland will provide a role for Dublin or Brussels?

PRIME MINISTER:

For Brussels, no I do not think so. We have got to continue, we have a process, I do not think it is at all helpful to start inventing fresh processes when we have a process in being, it undercuts the work that is being done and there is work being done, we have got a process, the Taoiseach and I would like to see that process reactivated. Both of us are entirely clear that that is the right way for us to proceed. So no I do not think an intermediary from any external source is likely to be helpful.

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QUESTION:

Inaudible.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, the people in Northern Ireland, go and talk to the people in Northern Ireland, not just the politicians, go and actually talk to the people in Northern Ireland, it does not matter whether you talk to the Protestants or whether you talk to the Catholics, go and ask them whether they want another 20 years like the last 20 years and they will tell you 'No'. Go and ask them whether they would like the politicians to be talking and they will tell you 'Yes'. Ask them whether they want to actually see the end of violence from whatever source it comes and they will say 'Yes'. We all have to try and deal with that cry from the heart and I think that is a good reason for optimism.

MR REYNOLDS:

That is exactly the message that I get from my own contacts on both sides in both communities in the North of Ireland, they want to see all the political leaders, both north and south and the British government and the Irish government all involved in the talks process. They recognise that the road to violence is a cruel one, it is the road to nowhere and that there are so many families up there, they have been hooked by this, they do not want to inflict that on their children. Remember now at this stage that we have young people in the North of Ireland, 21 years of age, they were born into violence, they have not known anything else.

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We certainly have a responsibility and both of us recognise that to try in every way we can not to inflict that type of lifestyle on the next generation and for the next 25 years we do not want to see that type of violence extend into the families of people in Northern Ireland and we are going to use every initiative that we can think of to try and change that situation and get people talking which is what people in Northern Ireland want them to do.

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)