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**Transcript of Interviews
given on the steps of Government Buildings
on Friday 1st December, 1995
The Taoiseach and President Clinton**

Taoiseach:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. President I would like to welcome you warmly to Ireland, to thank you for all that you have done to help bring peace to our country. To thank you for all that you are continuing to do to bring the people that live on this island closer together and to improve the relations that exist between this island and it's neighbours. I am delighted that it was possible for the British Prime Minister, John Major to whom I paid tribute here and myself to agree on a framework for moving forward towards a settlement of the differences that have existed on this island for three hundred years now and the fact that we were able to do that on the eve of your visit is no accident, because we both realised both John Major and I that the sort of support that you have been able to give yesterday and today to the people of this island searching for peace, searching for reconciliation, searching to heal the wounds that have been there for so long, and looking positively to the future. We both appreciated that your support gives them encouragement, gives us encouragement and is something for which we from the bottom of our hearts sincerely thank you Mr. President.

President Clinton:

Thank you very much. I would like to begin by thanking the Prime Minister for his warm welcome and more importantly I want to say a special word of thanks to all the people of Ireland and the people of Northern Ireland who have shown such extraordinary warmth and generosity to Hillary and me and our American delegation. This has been an extraordinary experience for us and I will never forget it. I thank the Prime Minister for what he said but the truth is that the credit for this latest progress belongs to the Taoiseach and to Prime Minister Major they announced this twin track initiative to advance the peace process in Northern Ireland shortly before I arrived here. It gives the parties a chance to engage in an honest dialogue where all their views are represented and everybody's voice can be heard and I certainly hope that it will be successful. Let me also say, as you, it establishes a means to address the issue of decommissioning and I am gratified that my good friend Senator George

Mitchell is going to lead the International Body to deal with that issue. He is seizing this opportunity already he has begun to organise the effort with other members, and I expect them to be at work shortly. Let me again say that I know that I speak for all Americans who want peace and ultimate reconciliation on this island. When I say that the Taoiseach has shown great courage in the pursuit of peace and we intend to do whatever we can to help him, Prime Minister Major, Mr. Spring and all others who are working for peace to succeed. The United States is honoured to stand with those who take risks for peace and we are doing it all across the world in the Middle East, in Bosnia and here. It is a difficult road to travel it is always easier to stay in the known way and to play on the known fears, but the right thing to do is to do what is being done here and I applaud it and I want to do everything I can to support it. Now let me also say that we had the opportunity to discuss the situation in Bosnia and I described as best I could the terms of the peace agreement and what we intend to do in the United States with our allies to implement it in a military way and what non military tasks have to be undertaken. I am very hopeful that after the peace agreement is signed in Paris in just a couple of weeks we will see a dramatic change in that war torn land, and let me say that the kind of thing that the International community is going to have to do in Bosnia is consistent with what Ireland has done everyday for nearly forty years now. Irish peacekeepers have helped people to live in peace from Cyprus to Somalia, to feed the hungry to do so much that most people in the world don't even know that the people of Ireland have done and again I want to say on behalf of the American people I am very very grateful for that. So we had a good meeting, we got a wonderful relationship, the sun is shining, and I hope it's a good omen for peace in Northern Ireland, thank you.

Charlie Bird:

Mr. President Irish television. The impasse has been broken at the moment but the road block is still there, Senator Mitchell's committee is going to start it's work. If in the end of the day the deadlock is still there, is your Government, your administration prepared to act as persuaders to get to all-party talks without a precondition?

President:

Well first of all let me say I think we ought to give these folks a chance to succeed. We shouldn't be talking about if at the end of the day, the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the Taoiseach have announced, I think, a brilliant formulation which permits people to go forward in dealing with all these issues without giving up any of the things they say they believe in and have to have

and I think we ought to give this process a chance to succeed. If it fails then we will reconnoitre and see what to do next. But I think the lesson of the last fifteen months is that the people like peace, they like the absence of violence, and they want to go forward not backwards, they want to deal with the issues that are still before them. So I am inclined to believe it will succeed, if it doesn't, then you can ask me that question.

Journalist:

What is your position on ... how can it effect where you go from here?

President:

I don't know that the visit has done anything to change in concrete terms the way we are engaged, except I believe that since we had quite a large number of members of congress here, and quite a large number of business people here, and quite a large contingent of people in the news media here, all see what is going on in Northern Ireland, I think it will deepen the support of the American people for our constructive involvement, and it might well intensify the number or the pace at which people in the private sector are willing to make investments and try to bring the economic benefits of peace to the people there. But we are committed we have been committed and we are going to stay committed and we will be there until the work is finished.

Taoiseach:

Now an American Journalist.

Journalist:

Mr. President, national republicans and congress are expressing concern about the nightmares and bombs which American forces are going to face .. when you go to Germany tomorrow what will you tell the American troops about the dangers they face, and have you heard any estimates that ...?

President:

Well first of all the American troops that have trained to go to Bosnia know every bit as much about the dangers they might face as I do. What I will tell them is that it is not a risk free mission. Indeed being in the military is not risk free we loose a significant number of our finest young people every year just in the training exercises because of the inherent danger of moving around and doing the things that they do in the air, on the land, and at sea. I will tell them that we have done everything we can to minimise the risk, we have guaranteed for them very robust rules of engagements so that if anyone attempts to

interfere with their mission or take action against them they can respond with decisive, indeed with overwhelming force and that their peace and their security, their safety is uppermost in my mind and in the mind of their General Officers who have done all the planning for this mission. But that this is a mission very much in America's interest, where we can make a huge difference and stop the worst slaughter in Europe since World War 2, and that I am very proud of them for doing it.

Journalist:

Mr. President are you escalating the U.S. involvement in Bosnia even before we go there suddenly, 20,000 troops have become 25,000, and the cost which was 1.5 billion to 3 billion?

President Clinton:

No well first of all I don't think it's going to be three billion, but the numbers keep getting banded around here some people who count the money in Europe would be double counting it. Some of this money is going to be spent anyway, I don't think we should count as a cost of the operation in Bosnia, for example the salary of someone who is going to get paid their salary whether they are there or not. The 25,000 let me say, I have always said we would have 20,000 in the theatre. We have been asked how many people are necessary to support them and we will have another roughly 5,000 people outside of Bosnia in support of those who are in Bosnia, but they will not be in the Bosnia theatre. There may be some extra cost associated with them that are sizeable enough and they ought to be included in the Bill that we tell Congress we expect to pay here. But if you look at it again, I would say this is an appropriate level of contribution, this is no more than a third it may wind up being considerably less than a third of the total contribution, depending on how many other nations participate. You heard the British Prime Minister say two days ago that he expected that Great Britain a country with a population of roughly - well less than a fourth of ours - is going to send thirteen thousand troops to the theatre. So the Europeans are going to take the major load and we should support them.

Taoiseach:

Mark Costigan.

President Clinton:

I just want to mention one other thing, too. I want you to think about these points. Number one at the end of World War Two, we established NATO recognising that we would try to stay together dealing with common security concerns. Admittedly at the time we thought those concerns might play themselves out in central Europe and a contest between what was in the Soviet Union and the Western Block, the NATO Block. But we understood that we had shared concerns that would manifest themselves first on the continent of Europe, but could become much more immediate for us. Now the NATO powers have voted among themselves to work with others through the United Nations and on our own and in brokering this peace agreement and trying to implement it. This is consistent with what we have done since World War Two. The second thing I would like to ask every American is how you would have felt - I would like to ask every American - how they would have felt if President Bush sent out the call for help in Dessert Storm, which was a war not a peace keeping measure, if they said you handle that you have more money, more soldiers, more interests there, you are concerned about the oil, you waste more oil then the rest of us do, you guys handle that. Now think about all the countries that helped us in Haiti. They didn't say I am sorry that's not our problem that's your problem you have the refugees in the United States we don't have them. They are on your shore, they are your problem, we can't be bothered with that. But instead we have had dozens of countries rally to the United States, to work with us in a common cause, when their values were violated by things that were of more immediate concern to us, that's what they did in Dessert Storm, that's what they did in Haiti, and I will say everyday, everyday for almost forty years there has been a citizen of Ireland in some distant country working for peacekeeping, in places where the United States did not go, and they did not ask what is the immediate interests to the people of Ireland in doing that. So I think the United States has been very well served by countries that have been willing to stand up with us, to stand up for good things, and right things that also effect our interests and I believe we should do this now.

Taoiseach:

Thank you, we must respect the time table I am sorry, thank you very much indeed.

Mark Costigan:

It seems that this historic trip by President Clinton to Ireland has facilitated an agreement between yourself and John Major - Ireland and Britain. Taoiseach you said ominous to the future of the peace process that it takes President Clinton's arrival to produce that level of movement forward. When we get to the really serious negotiations won't it be more difficult?

Taoiseach:

I think the ingredients for the agreement have been there for quite sometime. But I think it is the case that we both recognised that the President's visit to Britain and Ireland was an opportunity for both of us to launch in the best possible circumstances an initiative which we were probably going to have to agree anyway very shortly. But we were able to do it on the eve of President Clinton's visit in such a fashion as to ensure that his presence here has given it the fairest possible wind.

Journalist:

Is it necessary for the United States for the third time in this century to send troops to Europe. Why aren't the Europeans capable in your opinion of resolving these kinds of problems in Bosnia by themselves?

Taoiseach:

I think it's important to recognise that if you have genocide of the kind that was occurring in Bosnia, that's not just a European problem, that's a problem for the world at large. It's a problem for the common civilisation which we all share, it's a common problem for all of us who have democratic values, democratic values which stem in Europe chiefly from the inspiration of the American War of Independence and the United States declaration of independence, those values are universal and therefore there is a universal responsibility in my view for all of us to do whatever we can, in proportion to our means, to facilitate the making of peace. It is very important also to stress that the role that the United States, the European Union, and others have played in Bosnia is one of facilitating peace making. The peace is not being made by the United States no more than it is being made by the European Union. The peace in Bosnia is being made by the people of Bosnia themselves and that is the same situation in this country. We provide a framework they must do the deal.