

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES****IRELAND**

**Reference Code:** 2003/17/272

**Title:** Report in the Irish Times of a press conference given by the Taoiseach, John [Jack] Lynch TD, following his meeting with the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, in Munich, Federal Republic of Germany, at which potential solutions to problems in Northern Ireland were discussed.

**Creation Date(s):** 5 September, 1972

**Level of description:** Item

**Extent and medium:** 2 pages

**Creator(s):** Department of Foreign Affairs

**Access Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Report in the "Irish Times" of 5th September 1972 of a press conference given by the Taoiseach Mr. John Lynch T.D., following his meeting in Munich with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Edward Heath.

When he left the British Consulate-General where he talked with Mr. Heath, Mr. Lynch made it clear immediately that he did not intend to make any comment on the contents of the discussion, beyond saying that they included the Northern Ireland situation, particularly, the European summit and other matters of mutual interest.

They were useful talks, certainly, he added, and he expected to meet Mr. Heath again at the European summit conference in Paris on October 19th

There was sympathy between the British and Irish Governments in looking for a solution to the problems in the North.

He prefaced his press conference, shortly afterwards, by reiterating the confidential nature of the talks with Mr. Heath, "My meeting today with Mr. Heath," he said, "was a continuation of a series of confidential discussions and consultations that we have been having in relation to the Northern Ireland situation and, of course, we discussed other matters including our prospective membership of the E.E.C.

"But in so far as we had discussions today, the subject matter must remain confidential because it is on a confidentiality basis that these discussions and consultations can continue to be useful."

Mr. Lynch said that he did not get the impression from Mr. Heath that internment would be ended before an all-party conference on the North, "But," he added, "what I think is important at the present time is that the representatives of the two communities in the North of Ireland can come together to seek out areas of agreement on which they can create mutual understanding and on which they can build democracy and a fair society and administration"

First of all he wanted to see that no obstacle was placed in the way of holding the conference proposed by Mr. Whitelaw because it was very important that both sides should discuss their problems. In as far as he was able to help in bringing about the conference he would do what he could.

In reply to a question about whether the introduction of special courts in the North would be an acceptable alternative to internment and a compromise making possible the conference, Mr. Lynch said: "We have introduced special courts in the South and they are operating within the judicial system and a fair trial is being given to everybody. So, from our experience of special courts, they are operating well."

He went on: "My meetings with Mr. Heath, not only today but the previous ones, have been directed towards the process of reconciliation which I think is essential in the interests of the Northern Ireland communities and in the interests of Ireland as a whole. Naturally we do not in any way diminish our claim to the reunification of the country, but in the first instance we must aim towards reconciliation and terminating the tragic situation that exists. That is my immediate purpose and in this respect I don't think the Unionists need have any apprehensions."

Reverting to the question of internment Mr. Lynch said that both the S.D.L.P. and the Nationalists regarded it as an obstacle to an all-party conference. "And as long as they maintain that

attitude, obviously it'll be an obstacle, but I hope it will be in some way removed.

"It is not for me to say whether they should change their attitude. May I say again that I am convinced that the conference between the elected representatives of all the people in Northern Ireland is necessary in the first instance and unless they can get down to talk together the more difficult it will be to reach the day of reconciliation".

On the question of tightening control of the Border, Mr. Lynch said that the matter had been mentioned at all of his meetings with Mr. Heath and on each occasion he stressed that his Government employed to the fullest possible extent the resources available to it and he thought the British Government acknowledged that this was the position, and that the Border was unwieldy and impossible to seal off completely.

He denied that specific proposals for increasing security were made by Mr. Heath, "I haven't said that," he said. "But he has reiterated from time to time the desirability of our taking effective action against I.R.A. activities and I've always said that we have taken action as effective as we can. We have acted completely within the law, we have prosecuted offences so far as they can be discovered and evidence produced, we have set up a special court and strengthened its personnel recently and there have been something like 60 convictions. We have continued our surveillance of the Border and we have done all in our power within the law that the part of our country that we now have jurisdiction over will not be used as a basis for attacks on the communities in the North."

He disagreed with the suggestion of a British journalist that he "rejected" Mr. Heath's suggestion that the Republic was not doing enough and said: "I only want to reiterate that it is not a haven for I.R.A. men on the run".

He pointed out that Mr. Whitelaw stated in the House of Commons, after meeting Provisional I.R.A. men in London, that there were no charges against them, "and these are the men that some people allege are being given a haven in our country".

Some of them had already been prosecuted, some had been convicted, and others acquitted. "There is nothing within the law that we have failed to do to ensure the maintenance of law in our country and to ensure that our part of the country will not be used as a base for militant activity in the North of Ireland."

Asked specifically if Mr. Heath had referred to 28 raids across the border on 28 days in August as a basis for strengthening the watch on the Southern side of the Border (as was stated at the British briefing), Mr. Lynch repeated that he was not prepared to disclose the details of his discussion with the British Prime Minister, which he said, once more, were confidential, and that was the basis on which they could be most useful. In any case, he was not sure in what way the figure had been computed.

Replying to a question about the revelation in last Sunday's Observer by Maria McGuire, about dissension among Provisional I.R.A. men, Mr. Lynch said that his Government and the British Government were aware "to a limited extent" about the differences but learned about them only a short time before publication.

"It is at least welcome", he added, "that members of the Provisional I.R.A. are now seen to publicly dissociate themselves from that sort of campaign. If that indicates a weakening in the intention to carry on that campaign, then I would welcome it."

- 3 -

Finally, to a journalist who had just come from the British briefing, and asked him to say whether or not specific proposals were made by Mr. Heath for dealing with the I.R.A. in the Republic, Mr. Lynch said: "I don't think it's accurate to say that Mr. Heath made specific proposals to me as to crack down on the I.R.A."